

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HD WIDENER
HW T7HY 7

Digitized by Google

.C1344.38.30

Original Plan.



The Gift of
Professor
Andrews Norton
of Cambridge.
Rec^d. Apr. 18,
1850.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

RELATIVES AND FRIENDS,

CHIEFLY

IN REPLY TO ARGUMENTS

IN SUPPORT OF

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

BY MARY S. B. DANA,

AUTHOR OF

'THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN HARPS,' 'THE PARTED FAMILY,' ETC.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

1845.

Digitized by Google

C 1544.38.30

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
1850 April 18
Gift of Prof. A. Norton,
of Cambridge

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1845, by
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF THURSTON, TORRY, AND CO.
31 Devonshire Street.

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION.

THE days of torture, fire, and the sword, have, happily, almost entirely passed away. He who changes his religious opinions has not now, in Protestant countries at least, to fear the strong arm of ecclesiastical power, nor the civil law; no Inquisition holds over our heads its rod of terror; no dungeons open to receive us; no "Form of Concord" is imposed upon us; no "Act of uniformity" binds us to submit to certain rites and ceremonies. But is there not a kind of persecution still enacted, which, though less extreme and violent, is quite as onerous, and no less difficult to bear?

The days of proscription, slander, insult, and neglect, have by no means passed away. Cold greetings, averted looks, long and intimate friendships sundered in a moment, tell a mournful tale in respect to the toleration *really* exercised, in this country, so proud of its civil and religious liberty, towards those who have conscientiously changed their opinions. Nor are these the only methods by which the spirit of unyielding intolerance is developed. Injurious suspicions; direct charges which would almost break the heart of the sufferer, did he not feel himself above their reach; the imputation of any and every motive but the real one; all these must be experienced and endured by one who feels it his duty to leave the ranks of popular or ortho-

Digitized by Google

dox theology, commonly so callled, and candidly avow his honest opinions.

Many people do not seem to imagine, that one *can* honestly depart from the faith in which he has been educated. Independent thought in matters of religion seems to be regarded as an arrogant assumption, and to excite general indignation and surprise. It is evidently thought to be an innovation upon the established order of things. It is a phenomenon for which people are not prepared. And when I look around me, and observe how the great majority of mankind are blindly following the lead of others, how few there are who think for themselves, how few are willing to test their religious opinions by comparing them with other systems of faith, by bringing them all to "the law and to the testimony" of God's inspired word, clinging firmly to truth, following it wherever it may lead, and boldly rejecting error, — when these things meet my view, though I may be *distressed* at the exhibition of intolerance, I ought not, perhaps, to be *surprised* at the spirit which is manifested.

That I have ample ground for these remarks, will probably become sufficiently evident from the ensuing pages of this work. I have received letters from various quarters, since my change of opinions became known, some of the sentiments of which have amazed and appalled me. As I have been charged with indecent haste in making a change so fraught with momentous consequences, I wish to show, by other evidence than my own, that my change has not been so sudden as it has seemed to those who had no intimate knowledge of the workings of my mind. As my motives have been unkindly assailed, I wish to show, that I have not been actuated by mere caprice, but that I have *reasons* for my present opinions, which, at least, satisfy

Digitized by Google

me. So much has this community interested itself in my affairs, — so much has been said for which there was no foundation, — so much ignorance has been evinced in regard to my present opinions, and the religious belief of that body of Christians with whom I now sympathize, — that I feel it due to myself and to them, to remove, if possible, some of the erroneous impressions of those whose injurious remarks are the result of ignorance and prejudice, and not of malice.

To some of the numerous communications I have recently received, I propose to reply in the following pages. It was impossible for me to answer *individually* all the letters I received; and, even if I could have done so, there were many other persons who were *saying*, substantially, the very same things, and who could not have been reached by mere individual replies to my various letters. The extracts I shall make from these communications will, I think, abundantly prove that I have been, in a manner, *compelled* to speak in my own defence, and in defence of those who, through me, and in consequence of my present position, have been extensively and unjustly assailed. And may I not hope, that I may be instrumental in doing something to promote the interests of liberal and enlightened Christianity, or, at least, to soften the rigor of that judgment which has been so freely passed upon a conscientious and respectable body of Christians?

At this age of the world, a *rational* religion is certainly needed to counteract the prevalence of infidelity; and nothing but a rational religion will do this. Those in high places may sound the alarm, if they please, and tell us, that it is dangerous to use our *reason* in matters of religion, but it will be all in vain. We are not living in the dark ages; the majority of men in the present day will have a reasonable religion, or they

Digitized by Google

will have none. It will not always do to bind the consciences of men to creeds formed in the ages of darkness and superstition. As the world continues to emerge, gradually, it may be, from the midnight gloom in which it was enveloped before the Reformation, the work of reform will be more and more complete. This is the natural course of things. The morning sun slowly dispels the darkness of night, and shines brighter and brighter unto the noon-day, although it may not always shine uninterruptedly. Sometimes a cloud arises, and obscures for a while its radiance; but when the cloud disperses, we find that the god of day has been silently, but surely, advancing in his course. So is it with the glorious work of reformation and moral renovation. It is not half accomplished yet. Sometimes the work advances rapidly; sometimes, for a season, it seems to be retrograding; but it is cheering to perceive, that, on the whole, its march is onward. I observe, with pleasure, that many irrational and unscriptural tenets, formerly so popular, are now only nominally held. When their advocates are pressed upon the subject, they explain them away, so as to make them mean just nothing at all; and thus they virtually abandon them. And I also rejoice to perceive, that liberal sentiments are slowly, but surely, spreading themselves among the great body of the people. Let us thank God, and take courage, while we pray that the truth, *as it is in Jesus*, may prosper and prevail until all the inhabitants of the earth shall be brought under its blessed influence and control.

I will here take occasion to remark, that it will be impossible to observe any great degree of order in my arrangement of topics, as the same general subjects have been touched upon, in the different letters addressed to me, in a variety of different aspects. I could not, in reply to them, bring together all the

Digitized by Google

remarks relating to one general subject, without creating some degree of confusion. There will therefore, perhaps, be a little *repetition* of topics in different letters; but I hope, on so important a subject, that a little repetition will be pardoned. There is no limit to the frequency with which the same *objections* are advanced, after they have been answered over and over again.

It will be observed, that all the ensuing letters, with the exception of those to my parents, and one to a particular friend, are addressed as if to one individual; though, in reality, this is not the case. I have pursued this plan, for the sake of friendly concealment and convenience. The letters of my revered father contain no such sweeping assertions and denunciations, as will be noticed in some of the extracts from other letters. Though he has felt the trial as deeply as any other individual, his method with me has been that of calm investigation and argument, and therefore I have no desire to conceal the authorship of those things which he has written. He has approached the subject with that honest candor for which he is remarkable, and for which I honor and revere him.

I bespeak for the following pages a kind and candid consideration; and may the Holy Spirit of God lead into all truth both writer and readers.

Charleston, S. C.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

Page.

INTRODUCTION, ... iii

LETTER I.

A change of views, p. 1. The Trinity, 2. Modified Views, 3. Spirit of Inquiry, 4. Means of information, 5. Solitary Investigation, 6. New Views, 7 – 11. 1

LETTER II.

The terms God and Lord, 12–14. Explanations of Texts, Isa. vi. 1 – 10, compared with John xii. 41, pp. 15, 16. Rom. ix. 5, p. 16. Phil. ii. 6, 7, p. 17. Rev. i. 6, p. 18. Rev. v. 5 – 14, p. 19. Rev. xxii. 16, p. 19. 1 Tim. vi. 15, comp. with Rev. xvii. 14, p. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 14, p. 21. John i. 1, pp. 21, 22. Isa. vi. 1–10, comp. with John xii. 41, p. 23. John xx. 28, pp. 23, 24, 25. Phil. ii. 6, 7, pp. 26, 27. 2 Pet. iii. 18, pp. 27, 28. Heb. i. 6, p. 28. Col. i. 16, 17, p. 29. . . . 12

LETTER III.

Scott's notes, 30. Whitby's retractation, 30, 31. Extracts from Whitby, 31, 32. The divine Will, 33. Whitby on the Opinions of the Fathers, 34, 35. Sir Isaac Newton, 35. Pliny's letter to Trajan, 36. St. John's Gospel, 37, 38. . . . 30

LETTER IV.

Connection of doctrines, 39. Always an Inquirer, 40. Collateral doctrines, 41. The great point of difference, 42. Sources of Information, 43. Importance of our Influence, 44. Scott and Newton, 45. 39

LETTER V.

Investigation no Crime, 47, 48. Paternal faithfulness, 49. Caution recommended, 50. Review of circumstances, 51, 52. Exhibition of consequences, 53. 47

Digitized by Google

LETTER VI.

Remarks upon Honesty, 54. The Trinitarian Doxology, 55. The Unitarian Hymn Book, 56. Dr. Watts a Unitarian, 57–61. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, 62, 63. 54

LETTER VII.

An Explanation, 64. Early Opinions, 65. Bible Phraseology, 66. Inquiries and Replies, 67, 68. Extracts from Dewey's Sermons, 69. On the use of certain terms, 70. On the Baptismal form, 70, 71. On the Atonement, 71. On Human Depravity, 72. On Regeneration and Election, 73. On the Future State, 74. 64

LETTER VIII.

Inquiries answered, 75. Morality of Unitarians, 76. Involuntary Errors, 77. Unitarian Writings, 78. Lines on Luke xviii. 29, 30, pp. 79, 80. 75

LETTER IX.

An overflow of Feeling, 81. Love and Honor to Christ, 82. Christ a King, 83. Mistakes corrected, 84. Human Reason, 85. Expression of sentiments, 86, 87. A Prayer, 87, 88. . . . 81

LETTER X.

Unitarians do not deny Christ, 89. Additions to truth Errors, 90. Views of Atonement, 91. Illustration, 92, 93. Christ our Foundation, 94, 95. 89

LETTER XI.

The Scriptures honor Christ, 96. Trinitarians dishonor Christ, 97. An Extract, 98. Unitarians Christians, 99. Christ's authority, 100, 101. 96

LETTER XII.

Instability, 102. Opinions ought to be tested, 103, 104, 105, Who has the Holy Spirit? 106. No infallible human guide, 107, 108. 102

LETTER XIII.

Mental Freedom, 109. General Ignorance, 110. Assembly's Catechism, 111. Inward Conflicts, 112. Depravity, 113. Election, 114. Conflicts, 115. 109

LETTER XIV.

Calvinism, 116–121 116

Digitized by Google

LETTER XV.

God our Father, 122. Conceptions of God, 123, 124. Native Depravity, 125 – 127. 122

LETTER XVI.

Contemplation of Virtue beneficial, 128. Triumphs of Virtue, 129. Fenelon, 130. Horror of Calvinism, 131. My former faith, 132, 133. Blessing of Freedom, 134. 128

LETTER XVII.

Signs of the Times, 135, 136. 1 Tim. iii. 16, p. 137. Mysteries, 138 – 140. Extract from Robinson, 141, 142. . . . 135

LETTER XVIII.

An Extract, 143. Abstract Truth, 144. Erroneous Premises, 145, 146. Human Creeds, 147. Danger of Combination, 148. Belief not voluntary, 149. An Extract from Sparks, 150. On Vows, 151. 143

LETTER XIX.

Truth and its Consequences, 152. Volume of Poems, 153. God, our Saviour, 154. Christ's words, those of the Father, 155. A Reply, 156. Extract and Reply, 157, 158. . . 152

LETTER XX.

Election, 159. Final Perseverance of Saints, 160. Anti-Christ, 161, 162. An Extract, 163. Dogmatism, a sign of Weakness, 164. Arminians, 165. Christ not the Infinite God, 166. The Trinity, 167, 168. 159

LETTER XXI.

The phrase "I Am," 169, 170. Early Trinitarians, 171. Extract from Sparks, 172 – 175. 169

LETTER XXII.

Extracts from Sparks — the Fathers, 176 – 179. The Apostles, 180. Roman Catholic Writers, 181, 182. Lutherans and Arminians, 183. Dr. Watts, 184. Smalridge and Atterbury, 185. Tradition and Inference, 186, 187. 176

LETTER XXIII.

Erroneous Premises, 188. Colossians ii. 9, p. 189. Absurdity, 190. Religious Freedom, 191, 192. Searching the Scriptures, 193. Uniformity, 194, 195. Mental Freedom, 196. Injurious Imputations, 197, 198. Christian Charity, 199, 200. . . 188

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXIV.

Mental Suffering, 201. Extract and Reply, 202, 203. An Extract, 204. Denunciation unwise, 205. The Duke of Sussex, 206. Unitarians love Charity, 207. Religious Controversy, 208. An Extract, 209. Phil. ii. 6, p. 210. Atonement, 211. Mediation, 212. Christ ever Present, 213. Christ's Knowledge, 214. Omnipresence, 215. Harsh Epithets, 216, 217. . . 201

LETTER XXV.

Extracts, 218, 219. The Light of the Truth, 220. Colossians, chap. I. and II., p. 221, 222. Creation by Christ a Spiritual one, 223 – 227. An Extract, 228. Mystery, 229. Creation by Proxy, 230. Human Teaching not Infallible, 231. Extract and Reply, 232, 233. 218

LETTER XXVI.

Method of Investigation, 234 – 236. Use of Reason, 237, 238. Principles of Unitarianism, 239 – 241. 234

LETTER XXVII.

No Human Creeds, 242, 243. Who are Christ's Friends? 244, 245. The Lost Sheep, 246. Extracts and Replies, 247, 248. 242

LETTER XXVIII.

Extracts and Replies, 249. Scripture Tests, 250, 251. Testimonies of Trinitarians, 252 – 255. 249

LETTER XXIX.

Causes of Infidelity, 256 – 258. Signs of the Times, 259 – 263. . 256

LETTER XXX.

Painful Themes, 264, 265. John Blanco White, 266. General Remarks, 267, 268. Unwillingness to read, 269, 270. An Extract, 271, 272. 264

APPENDIX, ... 275 – 318

Digitized by Google

LETTER I.

January 19th, 1845.

My kind and venerated Parents:

It has become my solemn duty to make to you an announcement, which, I fear, will fill your hearts with sorrow. Would to God, that I could save you from the pain, which, from my knowledge of your views and feelings, I am sure awaits you; but I believe, as God is my Judge, that *truth* is dearer to me than life itself, and I dare no longer disavow the sentiments, which, after thorough, and *honest*, and prayerful deliberation, I have at length adopted.

I will keep you no longer in suspense, but will proceed to declare, that I do not now believe that my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Supreme God. I believe that there is but *one* God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things. I believe that "all power," was *given* unto him in Heaven and on earth;* that he was

* I would remark, that I suppose these terms to be applied to Christ *as the Messiah*, and that the expression, "all power," relates to his *Messiahship*, and to the offices he was to perform in Heaven and on earth, in connection with the redemption of mankind, which glorious object was what his Father sent him to

Digitized by Google

the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament writers, who, in the fulness of time, came into the world with a commission from God, and full power and authority to do the work which God had given him to do. In other words, after long and earnest deliberation, much diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, and fervent prayer to God for the assistance of his spirit, I conscientiously and firmly reject the doctrine of the Trinity.

This doctrine was a part of my education. I received it, as many others do, without thorough investigation, though, I must confess, it has often perplexed me beyond measure. Still I held it, as it seems to me all must do, as a strange mystery, which I must not attempt to comprehend; not considering, that a mystery does not necessarily suppose an incomprehensibility; and losing sight of the danger of admitting, what now appears to me to be an impossibility. It is impossible for me, and I now perceive that it has always been impossible to make one of three, or three of one, — one perfect and infinite being equal to three perfect and infinite beings. There may be gifted minds capable of comprehending this doctrine, but such is not mine. It is plain to me now, that I have all my life been worshipping three distinct beings; never having been able, with the most strenuous efforts, to combine the three in my own mind so as to form a

accomplish. It does not seem *natural* to use any of these terms in an unlimited sense. Jerome, one of the early Fathers, supposes that this term, "all power," had reference to the great power which came upon him when the Spirit of God descended upon him at his baptism.

Digitized by Google

simple idea. But now I bow to the divine authority, when I hear Jehovah saying, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord."

But to return. So anxious have I always been for clearer views upon this point, that I have eagerly read everything upon the Trinitarian side of the question which came in my way; yet always without the satisfaction so desirable to an honest and inquisitive mind, and always with the same melancholy feeling, that it was *a strange mystery;* though still I felt *bound* to receive it.

And now I will relate to you the process through which my mind has passed. For many years, I have not been able to believe, that faith in the Trinity was *necessary* to salvation, because I saw a great many exemplary Christians who did not hold the doctrine, but who nevertheless believed that Jesus was "the Christ," and "the Son of God;" and because the apostle John has said, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and that whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

I have often been startled, by hearing passages of Scripture wrested from what appeared to me to be their legitimate meaning, and forced to an agreement with some favorite hypothesis. Not long ago, in a bible class which I attended, the first part of the gospel by John was examined, and then many doubts found their way into my mind, but not with so much force, or in so tangible a form, as they have recently assumed. But, had I ever been disposed to give

Digitized by Google

the subject a thorough examination, I have never had access to the arguments in favor of Unitarianism, nor have I ever in my life before read upon that side of the question.

Not very long ago, while conversing with a much-loved friend, (you will know to whom I allude,) I found that my impressions in regard to Unitarians and to their system were exceedingly erroneous; and I expressed a wish to know a little more about their faith and practice. Was this desire wrong? Was it not in perfect accordance with that Christian charity, which "hopeth all things," and "thinketh no evil?"

And here let me exonerate from blame the two individuals from whom, entirely at my own request, I have procured the information which I wanted. In both instances, they expressed a hesitation in complying with my request, fearing to be considered obtrusive, if not by myself, at least by my friends. I cannot but believe, that this feeling arose from a confidence in the strength of their position, and a foresight of the consequences which have actually ensued.

Now what was I to do? Shut my eyes resolutely, and *blindly* cherish the faith in which I had been educated, or sift the matter for myself? What kind of faith is that, which fears to stand the test of impartial inquiry? Would not an ingenuous mind lose all confidence in itself, and its received opinions, while there remained a consciousness of this fear and dread of investigation? Was it not my sacred duty to "prove all things," and "hold fast" only to that which I found to be "good"?

Digitized by Google

Under these circumstances I *insisted* upon having access to some writings on the subject, and such as I wished were accordingly granted me. Now I know too well the candor and nobleness of my dear parents to fear that they will impute blame where none is deserved, unless indeed they carry the doctrine of *imputation* further than I think they do. Yet, in the first overflow of feeling, they may not view the matter as temperately and fairly as they will do hereafter, and this is why I enlarge upon the point. Now suppose that a Unitarian of my age and mental capacities — one, in fact, situated just as I am — should come to you, and ask you what the Trinitarian faith really was; would you withhold from such a person the means of information? I am very sure you would not. Be generous then, and if there be any blame in the matter, let it rest upon the guilty, and not upon the innocent,— and then it certainly will fall upon no human agent, but upon a *system* which will not bear investigation.

Perhaps you will say, "Why did you not bring your doubts to us? Perhaps we could have solved them." For an opposite course I had several reasons. First, I knew perfectly well what your views were, and I had access to Trinitarian systems of divinity, which were considered standard works; secondly, I wished to examine the subject with an unbiassed, unfettered mind; in short, to forget everything but the truth itself; and thirdly, I did not wish to give my friends unnecessary pain.

When the subject first presented itself fully and distinctly before my mind, in connection with a desire and

Digitized by Google

a determination to give it a complete investigation, I felt an instinctive fear, almost a *horror*, at my presumption. I took Dr. Dwight's sermons upon the divinity of Christ, and tried to be convinced that I had all my life been in the right — I read them over and over again — I had anxious days and sleepless nights ; and even in my dreams my visions were of three distinct Gods, entangled together in dreadful and inextricable confusion. Thus was I driven to the examination of the subject with a power which I could not withstand.

My chief source of information has been the New Testament, and especially the gospel by John. I endeavored to read with an unprejudiced mind, and a teachable spirit, and to explain passages of *doubtful import* by those which could admit of *no possible mistake*. While thus reading, the doctrines of the absolute unity of God, and of the *derived* power and authority of his Son, shone forth from every page of the blessed volume with a brightness and a clearness perfectly convincing to my wondering mind. I could no longer resist the mass of evidence which seemed fully to establish the superiority of the Father to the Son. I found that Christ always spoke of himself as inferior to his Father, of his power and authority as derived from his Father, — and it seemed to me that, if the case were otherwise, (with humility let me say it,) our blessed Lord had studiously endeavored to mislead us.

I also found that the vast number of texts which directly and explicitly asserted Christ's inferiority, could only be set aside by an *assumption* of the doctrine of two natures in Christ Jesus ; and even on this assump-

Digitized by Google

tion, such words could not have been used without apparent equivocation. On the other hand, the small number of texts which are brought forward as evidence of the deity of our Lord, *can* be explained without doing such violence to our reason, as the doctrine of two complete natures in one person — one infinite and the other finite — always must.

It seemed strange to me, that our compassionate Heavenly Father, who so well knew the weakness of human nature, should require us to receive a doctrine, *violating the common laws of that very reason which he has given us*, without such an explicit statement of it, and such an authoritative command for its reception, as would leave no possible chance for human reason to gainsay or resist it. But I could find no such statement, and no such command in the Bible. Now, I had always read the Scriptures with this doctrine pervading my mind, and *thus pre-occupied*, every passage of holy writ was made, if possible, to harmonize with my opinions.

I now found that our blessed Lord had given us a very different clue to the right understanding of the Scriptures when he declared, that *all power* was *given* to him in Heaven and on earth. With this, his own declaration, constantly in view, I found that I could understand many things which were dark before; that I had, in fact, got possession of the most prominent idea,— the current doctrine of the New Testament. This declaration of our Saviour is, to me, a most satisfactory comment on those passages brought forward in support of the deity of the Son of God. Now what

Digitized by Google

are inferences, and what are metaphysical arguments to the unequivocal and oft repeated declarations of Christ himself, and of his apostles? With these for my guide, the Bible becomes plain. And when I remember that many of these passages relied upon by Trinitarians, admit of various readings, — and when I consider the well known history of the received version of the Scriptures, and that our translation was made by Trinitarians, under the auspices of that pedantic bigot, James I., I feel that the Trinitarian side of the question has had every possible advantage, and am perfectly satisfied with the views which I have adopted.

And now, when I sit down seriously to compare the system of doctrines with which I have so long been fettered, with those under the influence of which my freed spirit now joyfully springs to meet its benevolent Creator, I cannot but exclaim, "thanks be to God, who hath given me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ!" My *mind* is disenthralled, disenchanted, awakened as from a deathlike stupor, — all mists are cleared away, — and this feeling of light, and life, and liberty, arises from a delightful consciousness that I have learned to give the Scriptures a rational and simple interpretation, and that, on the most important of all subjects, I have learned to think for myself.

My views of my Lord and Master are dearer to me than ever before, because they are more definite. He is still my Saviour, and the Saviour of the world — the instrument chosen by his Father through whom to bestow his unmerited mercy; a willing instrument, for he delighted to do his Father's will; an all-suffi-

Digitized by Google

cient instrument, for *all power* was given unto him. I believe that a living faith, which will lead us to imitate him, is the only ground of our salvation; but, while I fully believe in the divinity of his character and of his mission, I do not believe that he was the supreme God himself. I believe in the efficacy of his death,—the most striking circumstance of his history,—for it was *the seal of a new and better covenant*, —an evidence of his divine commission, and of his devotion to his Father's will; without which he would not have given us such an assurance of the glorious certainty of a resurrection, by being himself the first-born from the dead; without which his work would have been incomplete, and much less calculated to affect our hearts, to bring us to repentance, to lead us to God, and to save our souls.

You cannot suppose, my beloved Parents, that I have embraced these opinions hastily or carelessly. It is painful to expose oneself to the charge of fickleness, and it is very painful to separate oneself from those who are near and dear; but God is to be my Judge; to Him alone I must answer for my opinions; to my own Master I must stand or fall; and I dare not disavow what, upon mature deliberation, I believe to be the truth. I love you, God knows how well! but I love the *truth* better; and your blessed Saviour and mine has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." If then I embrace in my heart the doctrine which appears to me to be taught by Christ himself, must I not avow it?

With an anxious mind, an honest, tender conscience,

Digitized by Google

and a prayerful spirit, I have searched the New Testament, and the result is what I have told you. My mind is open to conviction, though I do not believe that any views can be presented with which I am not already familiar. Mourn not over me, my beloved Parents, as over one lost to you forever. If you think me in an error, rest assured it is not a fatal one. I am firmly convinced that no doctrine can be *necessary to salvation* which is not so plainly revealed, that the *conscientious* inquirer after truth cannot *possibly* mistake it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,"—about these plain statements there can be no mistake. Here is a glorious platform * on which sin-

* "It will appear," says Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, in his "Second Pastoral Letter," pp. 24, 25, "that the several denominations of Christians agree both in the substance of religion, and in the necessary enforcements of the practice of it; that the world and all things were created by God, and are under the direction and government of his all-powerful hand, and all-seeing eye; that there is an essential difference between good and evil, virtue and vice; that there will be a state of future rewards and punishments, according to our behavior in this life; that Christ *was a teacher sent from God*, and that his Apostles were divinely inspired; that all Christians are bound to declare and profess themselves to be his disciples; that not only the exercise of the several virtues, but also a belief in Christ, is necessary in order to their obtaining the pardon of sin, the favor of God, and eternal life; that the worship of God is to be performed chiefly by the heart, in prayers, praises, and thanksgiving, and, as to all other points, that they are bound to live by the rule which Christ and his Apostles have left them in the Holy Scriptures. Here then is a fixed, certain, and uniform rule of faith and practice, containing all the most

Digitized by Google

cere Christians of every name can meet, and exchange the right hand of fellowship, exclaiming in sweet accord, "thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

That our Heavenly Father may enable us all more perfectly to know him, the *only* true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; that we may increase in faith, and love, and good works; and especially that I may show in all my future life, that there is indeed the same mind in me which was also in Christ Jesus, is the earnest prayer of your affectionate daughter.

necessary points of religion established by a divine sanction, embraced as such by all denominations of Christians, &c."

To all which I heartily subscribe, and I therefore claim the name of Christian.

Digitized by Google

LETTER II.

THE TERMS GOD AND LORD.

My dear Father:

The words God and Lord do not, I suppose, necessarily denote *absolute supremacy*, although they do denote dominion and power. In studying the Scriptures, we ought to bear in mind the common sense in which certain terms were used by the common people at the time the Scriptures were written; because we know that, in the course of time, words do very much change their signification. In the Bible we have the term God applied in various ways. In regard to its use among the Greek and Roman philosophers and poets, who lived about the time of our Saviour, we are informed by the history of that period; we know that the term was used with very extensive latitude; and it is natural to suppose that the writers of the New Testament, who were chosen from the people, used their terms as they were used by the people, and intended to give a meaning which would be readily *understood* by the people. The early Christians used the word God in relation to different degrees of superiority or power, and not *as it is now used*, in an absolute sense. And I wish these

Digitized by Google

facts to be borne in mind while you peruse this letter. I am free to confess, that, as a general thing, the term should not now be applied to any but the Supreme Being, because now it has an absolute and definite meaning; though, in considering those passages of Scripture where it is applied to subordinate beings, it must still be used, but always with the fact of its different use in another age of the world, kept steadily in view.*

In this sense I do admit that the Saviour of the world, the Messiah, may be called a God; and I know that he is constantly called Lord; and why should he not be, when his Father *made* him *both* Lord and Christ? But it is concerning the term *God* that I wish to write. It is then, I think, a relative term, a name for a being who has dominion. Now, we are expressly told that the Supreme Being gave Christ *all power in Heaven* and *on earth*. Likewise, because the Father loved the Son, he gave "*all things* into his hand." He *crowned* him with *glory* and *honor*, and did set him over the works of his hands. And, "in that he put all in subjection under him, *he left nothing* that is not put under him." Thus, it appears to me, in the sense which I have before explained, a sense which was well understood when the Scriptures were written, our Heavenly Father *made* his well beloved Son a God over us, and over all the works of his hands; as he made Moses a God to Pharaoh — and as he called them Gods *to whom the word of God came* † — and as he commanded his

* See Appendix A. † See Appendix B.

Digitized by Google

people not to revile the Gods. Thus, truly, there are Gods many and Lords many; yet to us there is, *in an absolute sense*, but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, &c. Christ is then made a God to us, *under Him*, who is "the blessed and *only* Potentate — the *only* wise God — who *only* hath immortality."

This view of the subject explains to my mind all those passages where Christ is called God and Lord, *even as they stand in our common version*, though most of them are said to admit of a different translation. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever"* — that is, that throne which God had *given* to his Son, which must mean the seat of power in the mediatorial kingdom. It does not follow that he who occupies the throne *by permission of the Father*, who obtained it by the gift of the Father, existed from all eternity. The assertion is concerning the throne, or dominion, which is to endure forever; though, when cometh the end, it is to be delivered up to God the Father.† In this way I can also understand how Peter called his master Lord of all — "preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all.)"‡ For when he lifted up his voice on the day of Pentecost, he closed his noble address to the men of Judea, and all that dwelt at Jerusalem, with these words: "know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and Christ."

Nor am I startled at that passage where Christ, according to Trinitarians, is said to be "over all, God

* Hebrews i. 8. † See Appendix C. ‡ Acts x. 36.

Digitized by Google

blessed forever."* For we are expressly told *how this can be*. If all things were put under him, he certainly is "over all," and consequently a God; though let us never forget how "manifest" it is that "*He is excepted* which did put all things under him." †

I will now tell you, my dear father, how my mind has been satisfied in regard to those texts which you have proposed for my consideration. The first is Is. vi. 1–10, compared with John xii. 41. They do not appear to me at all to favor the doctrine of the supreme deity of the Son of God. The purposes of God are constantly spoken of as having been accomplished long before they literally were. It is a common mode of speech in the Bible, and implies the certainty of the fulfilment of God's designs. Thus we read of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. As the *Messiah*, Isaiah foresaw Christ's glory. To give you my own ideas of what may be the meaning of these passages, I cannot do better than to quote the remarks they have drawn forth from *Trinitarian* commentators. I will now quote from the 361st page of Wilson's *Concessions of Trinitarians*.

"These things said Isaiah, when, by the spirit of prophecy, he saw his glory, i. e. *foresaw the glorious appearance of Christ on earth in respect of the excellency of his doctrine, and greatness of his miracles*, and spake of him, i. e. *prophesied of Christ*. — WELLS. [Similarly, ERASMUS, *Op.* vii. p. 600; GROTIUS, BAXTER, and HAMMOND.]

* Rom. ix. 5. † See Appendix D.

Digitized by Google

"*His glory;* that is, according to the application of the evangelist, *the glory of Christ;* though Isaiah spoke of the Father. — SIMON. [According to the Racovian Catechism, p. 116, CHRYSOSTOM, THEOPHYLACT, GUIDO PERPINIAN, MONOTESSARO, and ALCAZAR, maintained that it was the glory of God the Father which appeared to Isaiah.]

"*Αυτου, his*, refers to God. MORUS justly observes, that Isaiah, in chap. vi., did not speak of the future greatness of the Messianic kingdom. — J. G. ROSENMÜLLER.

"*Ειδε, he saw*, either signifies *he foresaw*, as in chap. viii. 56, so that *αυτου* (*his* and *him*) refers, in both clauses, to the Messiah; or rather, it has respect to the description of *the glory of God*, in Isa. vi. 1, *sqq.* The words OF HIM, may, however, probably relate to the Messiah, inasmuch as the antecedent here is not more remote than in other passages. — VATER.

"The pronoun *αυτου, his*, should be referred to *Lord* (namely *God*) in ver. 38; and the passage has respect to Isa. vi. 1, *sqq.* where the prophet describes a vision, and affirms that he saw Jehovah sitting on a throne, &c. — KUINOEL. (So BLOOMFIELD.)"

I will merely remark, my dear father, that these and similar explanations of this passage never fell in my way till long after my own mind was settled on the subject, and I had come to the conclusion that it contained no proof whatever of the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ.

The next passage, Rom. ix. 5, I have already noticed.

The next, Phil. ii. 6, 7, even as it is translated in our common version, so far from presenting any difficulty

Digitized by Google

to my mind, is, in my view, a strong Unitarian text. "*Who, being in the form of God*" — that is, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express *image* of his person — made so by Him who also created man in his own image — "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*" He came as the Messenger of God to man, as God's vicegerent on earth, and *in that sense* it *was* no robbery to proclaim himself equal with God, and to demand equal obedience from mankind. He who refuses to obey Christ, refuses obedience to the Father, for the Father spake to the world through him. If we read on, we shall see how it was that he demanded that men should honor him even as they honored the Father. "God," says the Apostle, "hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, *to the glory of God* THE FATHER." The whole passage, it seems to me, *even when read as it is in our English Bibles*, is a clear and satisfactory explanation of the grounds on which our Master thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and seems intended to fill our minds with the most exalted ideas of the dignity and authority of the "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." But you are undoubtedly aware that many Trinitarians have contended for a different translation of the passage. And many likewise contend that the expression, "*being in the form of God*," does not convey the idea of Christ's own proper deity. In proof of these positions, see Appendix E.

The next passage you mention is found in Rev. i. 6.

Digitized by Google

I will quote the text, with a portion of the fifth verse. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Here everlasting glory and dominion are ascribed to Christ. And why not? No Unitarian will object to this. On the contrary, they rejoice to ascribe to him, as the Head of his church, as the King of saints — aye, even as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords — glory and dominion forever and ever. The kingdom which God sent his Son to establish, is to endure forever, and his dominion throughout all generations, and glory will forever crown the head of him who died for man's redemption. But I can see nothing in the text under consideration like a recognition of his supreme divinity. On the contrary, the first verse of the Revelations seems to settle the question in another way. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," says the author, "*which God gave unto him.*"

I do not see why, in the future world, subordinate worship may not be rendered to Jesus Christ. I am not sure that, even after the Mediatorial kingdom shall have been delivered up to God, and Christ's kingly office, as it related to this world, shall have ceased, the well beloved Son may not be still honored as a king in Heaven, in reward for his obedience unto death. Why even *we* are made, by Jesus Christ, "kings and priests unto God and his Father," and are, *in a sense*, to reign with him forever. If we overcome, we shall sit with him on his throne, as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne.

Digitized by Google

You next refer me to Rev. v. 5 – 14. This passage is of very much the same character with the last, and is urged as a proof that Christ is to be worshipped in Heaven. But here homage and worship is rendered to him as to a Lamb slain — as to a Redeemer, and not as to the Almighty and supreme God. The worship here described is very different from that rendered to the Father. Let me direct your attention to some remarks of Trinitarian writers upon this passage.

"Here," says Bishop Sherlock, (referring to Chap. iv. 11,) "you see plainly that the adoration paid to God the Father is founded on his being the Creator of all things. . . . Here, (referring to Chap. v. 9, 12,) you as plainly see the worship paid to Christ to be founded in this, that he was slain, and did by his blood redeem us. . . . From all which it is evident that the worship paid to Christ is founded on the redemption, and relates to that power and authority which *he received from God* at his resurrection." — *Works*, vol. ii. p. 491; Disc. I.

DAUBUZ remarks: "As the fundamental reason for which God the Father receiveth worship of the Jews and Gentiles, is because he hath created all things, and preserves them by his will, to have it perfected and executed on them; so the fundamental reason for which the Son is worshipped is *because he was slain*, and shed his blood thereby to redeem all mankind." Surely, then, if he is worshipped, *because he was slain*, he is not worshipped as the supreme God.

The next passage, Rev. xxii. 16, I have seen very satisfactorily explained in Pitkin's reply to Baker.*

* See Appendix F.

Digitized by Google

The next reference is to Heb. i. 8. According to my views already expressed in regard to the different senses in which the term *worship* may be used, and in regard to the subordinate worship which I believe may be rendered to Christ — the passage, I think, admits of satisfactory explanation. I see no reason to suppose that the worship there spoken of implies supreme worship, any more than the worship or prostration of the wise men from the east before the babe of Bethlehem.

Nor do the next passages to which you direct my attention, interfere, as I think, with my views. In 1 Tim. vi. 15, the phrase "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," is applied to the blessed and *only* Potentate, the supreme God; and in Rev. xvii. 14, the same phrase is applied to the Lamb. But it by no means necessarily follows, that these two beings are one and the same, or even equal. If we wait "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," He, "who is the blessed and *only* Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords," will "show" us how and why his well beloved Son is also proclaimed "King of Kings and Lord of Lords;" indeed, I think he has plainly shown it to us already. But now we see through a glass darkly; then, blessed be our Heavenly Father, we shall know even as we are known. For further observations in regard to the above-mentioned passage, Rev. xvii. 14, see Appendix G.

Another of the passages to which you refer, is the Apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Digitized by Google

And in regard to it you say, "It has ever been among the most conclusive to my mind in favor of the doctrine, which, from its difficulties, you have been tempted to reject." But, my dear father, it does not strike my mind at all in the same way. If *grace* and truth *came by Jesus Christ*, and God gives the influences of his spirit to enlighten and sanctify us, it seems perfectly natural that the "grace" and "communion" which is thus bestowed upon us by the Father, should be mentioned in connection with that "love" which devised and carries on the scheme of redemption. I cannot see how the mere fact of their being named together proves anything in regard to a trinity of persons in the Godhead. For further remarks upon this passage, quoted from "Burnap's Expository Lectures," see Appendix H.

You allude to John i. 1. "The Word was God." If by the term "Word," Christ was *certainly* intended, it would be a strong passage in favor of your views. But that is a question which must, after diligent investigation, be decided by each one for himself. The passage, says Norton, "has been misunderstood through ignorance or disregard to the opinions or modes of conception, which the writer, St. John, had in mind." Some quotations on this subject from his "Statement of Reasons," will show you what has been, to me, a very satisfactory explanation of this difficult passage. "There is no English word," says he, "answering to the Greek word *Logos*, as here used. It was employed to denote a mode of conception concerning the Deity, familiar at the time when St. John wrote, and inti-

Digitized by Google

mately blended with the philosophy of his age, but long since obsolete, and so foreign from our habits of thinking, that it is not easy for us to conform our minds to its apprehension. The Greek word *Logos*, in one of its primary senses, answered nearly to our word *Reason*. It denoted that faculty by which the mind disposes its ideas in their proper relations to each other; the Disposing Power, if I may so speak, of the mind. In reference to this primary sense, it was applied to the Deity, but in a wider significance. The Logos of God was regarded not in its strictest sense, as merely the Reason of God; but under certain aspects, as the Wisdom, the Mind, the Intellect of God. To this the creation of all things was *especially* ascribed. The conception may seem obvious in itself; but the cause why the creation was primarily referred to the Logos or Intellect of God, rather than to his goodness or omnipotence, is to be found in the Platonic philosophy, as it existed about the time of Christ, and particularly as taught by the eminent Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria."

Mr. Norton then goes on to describe this philosophy, and especially the strong personification of the Logos. I wish I had time and space to transcribe the whole passage, but must content myself by referring you to the work itself from which these extracts are taken. It will repay an attentive perusal. Mr. Norton continues, "St. John, writing in Asia Minor, where many for whom he intended his Gospel were familiar with the conception of the Logos, has probably, for this reason, adopted the term 'Logos' in the proem of his gospel,

Digitized by Google

to express *that manifestation of God by Christ*, which is elsewhere referred to the Spirit of God." Mr. Norton's reasons for this opinion, are, to my mind, perfectly conclusive; you will find them in his "Statement of Reasons," pp. 229 – 250.

You allude again, in a more particular manner, to the passage Isa. vi. 1 – 10, as compared with John, xii. 41. You speak of the name Jehovah, as *applied* to Christ, and you inquire, "Who, on such a comparison of the passages, was it, or could it be, whose glory, as Jehovah, the prophet saw? By what possible process can these texts be silenced?" They could not be silenced if St. John had expressly informed us that the *whole* display of glory which Isaiah saw, was the glory of *Christ*; but if the words, "when he saw his glory, and spake of him," refer to Christ, which some Trinitarians doubt,* it must be to Christ's glory *as Messiah*— a glory given him by his Father — which Isaiah saw as a part of the vision described in the 6th chapter of his prophecy.

In allusion to John xx. 28, where Thomas says, "My Lord and my God," you remark, that "Unitarians prefer to let Thomas, in his alleged astonishment, or fright, fall into blasphemy, rather than receive his attestation." I do not know that I have met with a single Unitarian writer who regards these words merely as an unmeaning exclamation of surprise. Norton says,

* "*Αυτου, his*, refers to God." — J. G. ROSENMULLER. "The pronoun *his* should be referred to *Lord* (namely *God*) in verse 38." — KUINOEL. (So BLOOMFIELD.) "Two manuscripts and a few versions have *the glory of God*, or *of his God*." — DR. ADAM CLARKE. *Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 184, 361.

Digitized by Google

"Both titles, (that is, Lord and God,) I believe, were applied by Thomas to Jesus. But the name 'God' was employed by him, not as the proper name of the Deity, but as an appellative, according to a common use of it in his day; or perhaps in a figurative sense, as it sometimes occurs in modern writers." He then refers to several passages from Young, of which the following is one;—

> "The death-bed of the just
> Is it his death-bed? No; it is his shrine:
> Behold him there just rising to a God."

But all Trinitarians* do not consider this passage as proving the supreme divinity of Christ. KUINOEL says: "From this address of Thomas, many commentators are of opinion, that the doctrine of Christ's divine nature may be established, and conceive that the sentence, when filled up, would be thus: 'I am not faithless; I doubt no longer; thou art my Lord and my God.' But, on the contrary, *others justly observe*, that Thomas used the term God in the sense in which it is applied to *kings and judges*, who were considered as representatives of Deity, and preëminently to the Messiah. See Ps. lxxxii. 6, 7; xlv. 6, 7; cx. 1. John x. 35."

* I have been informed by a gentleman whose critical attainments cannot be doubted, and who is likewise a Unitarian, that Kuinoel and Rosenmuller were neither of them Trinitarians. They were, he says, undoubtedly Arians. Their testimony, therefore, must be received by Trinitarians for just what, in their estimation, it is worth. Michaelis, however, is, I believe, good Trinitarian authority.

Digitized by Google

ROSENMULLER thus explains the passage: "I acknowledge thee as my Lord, and as the Messiah, my King."

MICHAELIS says: "I do not understand this as an address to Jesus; but thus, 'Yes; it is he indeed! He, my Lord and my God!' Yet, in giving this interpretation, I do not affirm that Thomas passed all at once from the extreme of doubt to the highest degree of faith, *and acknowledged Christ to be the true God*. This appears to me too much for the then existing knowledge of the disciples; and we have no intimation that they recognized the divine nature of Christ, before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I am therefore inclined to understand this expression, which broke out from Thomas in the height of his astonishment, in a figurative sense, denoting only 'whom I shall ever reverence in the highest degree.' If he only recollected what he had heard from the mouth of Jesus ten days before, (chapter xiv. 9, 10,) that recollection might have given occasion to an expression which probably Thomas himself could not have perfectly explained; as is often the case with such words as escape us when we are under the most overpowering surprise. But yet the expression might be equivalent to saying, 'He! my Lord! with whom God is most intimately united, and is in him! In whom I behold God, as it were, present before me.' Or, a person raised from the dead might be regarded as a divinity; for the word *God* is not always used in the strict doctrinal sense." All the above quotations are from *Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 383, 384.

Digitized by Google

Again, you allude in a more especial manner than before, to Phil. ii. 6, 7, and after requesting me to notice the expression, "took upon him," you ask, "is not the *him* a being pre-existent, to whom another was added by way of assumption?" I reply, that *that* depends upon the sense you give to the succeeding words, "form of a servant," — whether you mean to apply it to his *condition*, or to his *essential nature*. In regard to this point you say, "if the expression 'form of a servant' means, as it unquestionably does, a *real* servant, must not the former expression, 'form of God,' imply a *real* God?." And you ask, "what magic can undeify Christ here, which will not, at the same time, and precisely in the same way, unhumanize him also?"

I have no idea that either of those expressions have any reference to a divine or a human *nature*, but merely, the one, to a condition of majesty and authority, and the other, to a condition of meanness and servility. That this is also the opinion of many Trinitarians, I can easily prove to you.

PISCATOR says: "By *the form of God* I do not think that the Apostle means the divine nature itself. As, in the following verse, the phrase *form of a servant* signifies, not human nature itself, but a servile state or condition; so, by parity of reasoning, the expression *form of God* denotes, not the divine nature, but a divine state or condition."

"Jesus Christ," says LE CLERC, "as man, appeared, in certain respects, more like God than men, inasmuch as he commanded all nature with absolute authority, and performed unparalleled miracles. This

Digitized by Google

the Apostle terms the *form*, that is, the resemblance of God; a sense in which the same word is used in verse 7, and in Mark xvi. 12."

"Nothing," says BEAUSOBRE, "agrees better with this passage, than what the Evangelist says: 'Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands' (this is *the form of God*,) 'he laid aside his garments, poured water into a basin, took a towel, and girded himself, and began to wash his disciples' feet' (this is *the form of a slave*.) John xiii. 3–5."

WHITBY, while he was a Trinitarian, thus commented on this passage: "By this expression most interpreters do understand, that the Apostle doth intend Christ was essentially and truly God; but though this be a certain truth, yet I conceive this cannot be the import of the expression in this place." And, according to Wilson, PARKHURST and MACKNIGHT "both deny that the *form of God* indicates essence or nature, and, with Whitby, interpret the phrase as referring to the visible glorious light by which Christ manifested himself to the patriarchs."— *Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 477, 478. See also again Appendix E, where the same opinion is seen to have been expressed by MICHAELIS, STORR, CALVIN, HEERBRAND, and others.

Again, you refer me to 2 Pet. iii. 18. "To him be glory both now and forever;" and you ask, "Can glory be given to any but God? or, if it can, can it, as to duration, be given *forever* to any but him?" I answer, that I find, in several places in the New Testament, that glory *was* expressly given to Christ by his Father. Christ asserts that he is glorified in his followers;

Digitized by Google

"All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." He speaks of the "glory" which, says he, addressing his Father, "thou gavest me;" and in a prayer for his disciples, he says, "that they may behold my glory, *which thou hast given me.*" And shall not I *ascribe* glory to him, on whom God has so abundantly *bestowed* glory? And if I ascribe glory to him now, why should I not do it as long as my soul exists, which will be "forever?" Why should I not, without believing him to be God himself, be willing to say, "to him be glory both now and forever?"

You call my attention, in the next place, to Heb. i. 6, "And let all the angels of God worship him;" and you inquire "when man is forbidden to worship angels, as in Rev. xxii. 8, 9, can angels be ordered to worship a *mere* man?" I answer, that this would be a startling passage, if the term "worship" were always used in the Bible in the same sense, and to denote supreme homage. But that it is frequently used in relation to subordinate homage or reverence, there can be no doubt. This passage, then, which, in itself considered, conveys a doubtful meaning, must be interpreted so as to harmonize with what is plain and undoubted. Now to me it is plain that Christ has revealed himself as a being distinct from and inferior to his Father, and therefore I conclude that God's "angels" or messengers, were only commanded to render him subordinate worship, or reverence.

In allusion to Col. i. 16, 17, you say, "even if we here admit, according to the Unitarian hypothesis, that Christ was God's agent in the creation of the terrestrial

Digitized by Google

and celestial worlds, they are said to be made, not only 'by him,' but 'for him.'" But I do not understand the creation here spoken of to have any reference to the material worlds, but only to that spiritual creation, or to that new order of things which Christ came to introduce. See Letter XXIV. where the subject is more fully discussed.

Digitized by Google

LETTER III.

SCOTT AND WHITBY.

My dear Father:

I have shown you how, to my mind, the passages you have mentioned may be reconciled with the doctrine of the subordinate nature of the Son of God. My mother has requested me to read prayerfully the Gospel of St. John, with the notes and comments of Dr. Scott. I have done so, but no new light has been introduced into my mind, and my sentiments remain unaltered. I find that a great many of the notes touching the supreme divinity of the Messiah, are accredited to Dr. Whitby, and it strikes me that it is not quite fair in Scott to publish the sentiments of an author — to give them to the world as his opinions — when that author has formally and solemnly retracted those very opinions. This has been done by Dr. Whitby, and he has, in doing it, made use of such language as the following: "Nothing," says he, "but the love of truth can be supposed to extort such a retraction from me, who, having already lived so long beyond the common period of life, can have nothing else to do but to prepare for my great change; and, in order thereunto, to make my peace

Digitized by Google

with God, and my own conscience, before I die. To this purpose I solemnly appeal to the searcher of hearts, and call God to witness, whether I have hastily, or rashly, departed from the common opinion; or rather, whether I have not deliberately and calmly weighed the arguments on both sides drawn from Scripture and antiquity." Now it may be that Dr. Scott has somewhere given some information to the simple and unlearned readers of his commentaries that the man, whose opinions he has so freely quoted in regard to the Deity of the Son of God, *afterwards solemnly retracted those opinions*; if he has not — and I have never been aware that he has—then I say it is at least *a question* in my mind whether the procedure was perfectly candid and honest.

Dr. Whitby says: "When I wrote my commentaries on the New Testament, I went on, too hastily I own, in the common beaten road of other reputed orthodox divines; conceiving, *first*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in one complex notion, were one and the same God, by virtue of the same *individual* essence communicated from the Father." "Then, as a natural consequence from this doctrine, I *secondly*, concluded that those divine persons differed only *in the manner of their existence*. That the difference can be only *modal*, even Dr. South hath fully demonstrated; and that this was the opinion generally received from the fourth century, may be seen in the close of my first part to Dr. Waterland." Dr. Whitby then goes on to prove that the orthodox Anti-Arian fathers condemned this very doctrine as rank Sabellianism; and this he

Digitized by Google

proves from the words of Athanasius and Epiphanius; both testifying, that to say the Father and the Son were *of one and the same substance was Sabellianism.* "And surely," he says, "to contend that this is the doctrine of the Church of England, is to dishonor our Church, and in effect to charge her with that heresy which was exploded with scorn by the whole Church of Christ from the third to the present century." And yet, my dear father, this doctrine is what my catechism taught me; viz., "*the same in substance*, equal in power and glory."

Dr. Whitby goes on to prove, from Scripture, and the fathers of the first three centuries, incontestably, as it appears to me, that the nature and powers of Christ were entirely derived from the Father. "The primitive fathers," says he, "of the first three centuries do also generally agree that the Son received his power from the Father, as it hath been observed already. And particularly Hippolytus, 'that his knowledge was given him by the Father:' to which the orthodox are forced to say that he received this power, this dominion, and these attributes, by receiving the same individual essence with the Father; which yet is a thing impossible in itself, since an *individual* essence cannot be communicated, for that very reason, because it is an individual; that it is one, and no more."

Again, he says, that they who style themselves orthodox "constantly assert, that the will, power and wisdom of the whole Trinity is one and the same; and that what one wills, does, and knows, they all will, do, and know, by virtue of this unity of essence." Again,

Digitized by Google

" that where the numerical essence is one and the same, the will and actions of that essence must be one and the same. And where the will and actions are numerically distinct and diverse, there the individual essence must also be distinct and different. And this Damascen declares to be the doctrine of the holy Fathers. Hence, it demonstratively follows, that, if the essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be numerically one and the same, the will, and all the other actions of these three, must be numerically one and the same; so that, what the Father wills and does, the Son and Holy Ghost *must* will and do also."

Now, my dear father, if the three persons in the Trinity have *one mind and will*, how could Christ say he came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him? "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me." He was speaking of a will which he *came* to do, and therefore must have reference to the mind and will which *devised* the scheme of redemption, in other words, the *divine* will, and this will, he says, was the will of another. Now, it has been shown, that, according to the orthodox belief, the Father and Son have *the same mind and will;* but Christ, by these declarations, most plainly and fully contradicts the assertion.

On the question whether the absolute equality of the Son with the Father, or the doctrine of the Trinity was known to the earliest Christian writers, I have collected from Whitby's *Last Thoughts* the following remarks: "The hypostatical union" was "broached first by Cyril of Alexandria, and by Theodoret pronounced to

Digitized by Google

be a thing unknown to the Fathers that lived before him. Origen proceeds, page 387, to show, that, among the multitude of believers, some, *differing from the rest, rashly affirmed*, as the Noetians did, that our Saviour was the God over all, which, saith he, 'we christians, or, we of the church, *do not believe*; as giving credit to the same Saviour who said, my Father is greater than I.' And he saith, 'we christians manifestly teach, that the Son is not stronger than the Father, who is the Creator of the world, but inferior in power to him.' Which words afford the clearest demonstration that the Church of that age did not believe that our Saviour was the Supreme God. Novatian is, if possible, still more express in his interpretation"—that is, of the text, I and my Father are one. "For in answer to the objection of the Sabellians from this place, he saith, 'that *unum* being here put in the neuter gender, denotes not an unity of person, but a concord of society between them; they being deservedly styled *one*, by reason of their concord and love, and because, whatsoever the Son is, he is from the Father.' Pampelius's note upon these words is this: 'Novatian did not write accurately in this place, as making no mention of the communion of the essence between the Father and the Son, but introducing an example from the apostle contrary to it; in which thing I doubt not to pronounce him erroneous, seeing the Church *afterwards*, in diverse councils, defined the contrary.' Many of the ante-Nicene Fathers in effect said the same thing. Justin pronounces the Son to be 'another from the Father in number, but not in consent.' Because he never

Digitized by Google

would do anything but what 'the Maker of the world, above whom there is no other God, would have him do and speak.' Eusebius pronounces the Father and Son to be one, 'not as to the essence, but as to communion of glory.' The council of Antioch pronounced the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be 'three in subsistence, but one only in consent' or concord. Novatian says, God the Father is 'that one God, to whose greatness, majesty, and power, nothing can be compared.' And indeed, all the Greek Fathers, from Justin to Eusebius inclusively, do frequently inform us that the Son 'did obey the will of the Father,' that he did 'minister and was subservient to him,' &c. &c." — *Whitby.*

Sir Isaac Newton's opinions in regard to the Trinity may be gathered from his "Historical Account of Two Corruptions of Scripture." In the number for Oct. 1823, of Sparks's Collections, he says: "Whiston tells us of his," Newton's, "profound knowledge of Church history during the three first centuries of the Christian era, and of his having been convinced by his study of this history, that the doctrine of the Trinity was introduced into the Christian scheme many years after the time of the apostles. The tenor of Newton's writings is in accordance with this declaration, nor do they exhibit any evidence, that their author ever believed in a Trinity. The charge against Horsley of having suppressed his papers because they were adverse to this doctrine, has never been contradicted."

You have mentioned to me, my dear father, the fact, that in Pliny's letter to Trajan, he testifies that the early Christians worshipped Christ as God. Now that

Digitized by Google

letter conveys a very different impression to my mind; and, it seems to me, is very far from proving that they made our Saviour equal with God. Bear in mind that it is the testimony of a man whose heart was filled with hatred against the Christians; so much so that he says, "it has been a question with me very problematical, whether any distinction should be made between the young and the old, the tender and the robust; whether any room should be given for repentance, &c." Now all that he testifies is this;—and remember too that he is only giving the testimony of those who were in the act of *retracting*, and of course would do their utmost endeavor to please the enemies of Christianity—"that they were accustomed, on a stated day, to meet before daylight, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ, as to *a God*, and to bind themselves by an oath, &c." Bear in mind also that the term worship, (for though it is not used in Pliny's letter, it is inferred from it,) was used in the early ages of the Church with as great latitude as the term God, and did no more *always* mean *supreme* homage than the term God *always* meant the *supreme* Being. Nebuchadnezzar "fell upon his face and *worshipped* Daniel," but not as the supreme God; and the eastern sages worshipped the infant Jesus, but not as the supreme God. On the whole, this expression in Pliny's letter, on which so much reliance is placed in all the ecclesiastical histories written by Trinitarians, goes *very far* towards convincing me that the early Christians did *not* regard Christ as equal with the Father.

I have a few remarks to make in regard to the gos-

Digitized by Google

pel of John. It is generally supposed that the apostle John wrote his gospel to supply what had been omitted by the other evangelists. He could not have written it to prove the human nature of our Lord; that was a self-evident truth. Nor could he have written it to prove his divine nature, for the drift and tenor of the book evidently implies an inferiority of some kind to the Father. If his main object was to prove that he had *two natures*, it is strange that he pays so little attention to it. If that were his object, would he not, as a man of common sense, much more as a man inspired by God, have so announced it, that, at least, the proposition could be stated in his own words—not by taking detached portions of the book, laying them together, and inferring what his object was—but by the clear, explicit, *unquestionable* statement of the doctrine which he was writing a book to establish. It appears plain to me, that his object was to prove *the divinity of the mission* of his beloved master; that he came from God with full power and authority to establish a new dispensation—to create all things new. And this view throws a flood of light upon the whole book, especially upon the fourteen first verses, which can thus be explained in several ways without a resort to the perplexing and impossible ideas of three perfect beings equal to one perfect being; or of two incompatible natures, with different perceptions, existing in one of those beings. For it is only on this hypothesis that the declaration of Christ respecting the day and the hour which no man knew, *neither the Son* —and several other declarations—can be explained without impeaching the veracity of our blessed Lord,

Digitized by Google

in whom was no sin, neither was *guile* found in his mouth. But if the divine and human will of our Saviour were one and the same, and the will of the three persons in the Trinity — of whom he was one — was one and the same, Christ virtually said, I seek not mine own will, but the will of myself, &c. In fact, just try to read the New Testament, with this idea, which grows naturally out of Trinitarianism, in the mind, and you will see what sad confusion it makes. May the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth.

Digitized by Google

LETTER IV.

CONNECTION OF DOCTRINES.

My dear Father:

I am very well aware that you speak correctly when you say, "Neither the tenets you have renounced, nor those you have embraced, *stand alone.*" "They constitute," you remark, "not only very material parts, but perhaps even bases of *systems* of belief, which diverge farther and farther from each other the more they are carried in detail to their respective and very different results. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' is a rule, not only for judging persons, but single tenets and systems. And every single tenet, especially on the momentous points your letter embraces, has and must have a momentous connection with and influence upon other tenets. Human depravity, its origin, nature and extent; regeneration and its constituents; justification, in what it consists, and on what it rests; and indeed, every important doctrine, almost without exception, will be materially, if not fundamentally affected. Until you have had time to contemplate these results, and to ascertain their connection, and the action and reaction of

Digitized by Google

doctrines upon each other, will it not be better still to consider yourself an inquirer, and still, when you have occasion to speak on the subject, to announce yourself such ?"

Before I proceed to reply to this extract, my dear father, allow me to thank you, from the depths of an overflowing heart, for the tone of serious mildness and charity which characterizes your management of my peculiar case. Rest assured, that every word and letter which comes from your pen has infinitely more weight with me than those furious denunciations which give evidence of a zeal that is not according to knowledge. You request me to consider myself "an inquirer." I do, my father, consider myself an inquirer; *and shall always do so while I live.* That is to say, while my mind may be fully satisfied upon any given point, I shall always be ready to hear reasons for a different opinion, and to embrace and proclaim such an opinion when those reasons satisfy my mind. In the face of all the world, and in spite of the charges of "instability," and "love of excitement," and "love of notoriety," which may be showered down upon me, I shall be ready to retract again my newly embraced opinions, when I see them to be unscriptural and untenable.

I was in no special haste to avow my change of views; but you must be aware that we cannot always choose our times and seasons, or control our circumstances. You must also be aware that the moment it became known to some of my friends that I was even examining certain doctrinal points, all calm, unbiassed, sober

Digitized by Google

investigation was at an end. I found it absolutely necessary to acquaint my friends with the *progress* my mind had made — the conclusions to which I had arrived — the opinions I had adopted — and my reasons for those opinions. It has been for some time a subject of remark that I did not join in singing the doxology, and I have been obliged to evade questions, and to smile at exclamations, because the proper time for explanation had not arrived.

You speak of collateral doctrines and tenets which will be materially affected by my Unitarian views. But many of those doctrines, to which you allude, had passed in review before my mind, and had become materially modified long before my attention was turned to the great and distinguishing feature of Unitarianism — the absolute unity of God. It is a long time since my Calvinistic brethren, had they known my views, would have been willing to grant me the title of "Orthodox." But, after all, the *great* question is, do I believe in a trinity of persons in the Godhead, or am I a believer in the absolute unity of God, and the subordinate nature of his Son?

It is now two months or more since my mind has been entirely satisfied in regard to the *one* great point of difference between Trinitarians and Unitarians, and, though it should require years of prayerful study to arrive at satisfactory conclusions upon other doctrinal points, I should all those years be still a Unitarian, if I continued, as I now am, a believer in the absolute and unqualified unity of God. Therefore, when my friends seem to expect me to wait till I am entirely satisfied in

Digitized by Google

regard to every point of doctrine, before I avow myself a Unitarian, I answer that this may be the work of a lifetime, and does not at all affect the question of my being, or not being, a Unitarian. It might as well be insisted upon that a man should arrive at complete perfection, before he calls himself a Christian. I know that there are great differences of opinion among Unitarians, but so there are among Trinitarians; some are high Calvinists, some are moderate Calvinists, and some are Arminians.

The question with me, then, is, do I believe that there are three persons in one God, or do I believe that Jehovah is one, *and one only?* Now I believe that he is strictly one, and it seems impossible that I can ever believe otherwise, when, to my mind, it is as plain as demonstration, that the contrary scheme involves a contradiction. I must be a Unitarian, or a Tritheist, which last I cannot be while I take the Bible for my guide. He is a Unitarian who rejects the Trinity; and be his views of the atonement, of native depravity, of human ability, or inability, what they may, still he is a *Unitarian;* he has gone over to one of the two great divisions of the Protestant world. If, therefore, he is a Unitarian, and not a Trinitarian, he ought to be in the Unitarian, and not the Trinitarian church.

You remark, "it is but too evident that you have had before you the entire strength of one side of the question, &c." It may be that I have; but you must bear in mind my declaration, that I was satisfied in regard to the undivided unity of God *before* I had read one single

Digitized by Google

Unitarian work, *except the New Testament;* which I now regard as the most powerful and convincing Unitarian book in the world. When I make this declaration, I have a right to be believed; and I leave it with you, who know, better than others can know, my attachment to the truth. I went to the Bible, divesting myself, as much as possible, of educational prepossessions; and it was *from that source* my mind was satisfied. I read the New Testament day and night, with the concentrated energies of my intellect, and rose up from the perusal a thoroughly convinced Unitarian.

I think you are mistaken also, my dear father, when you assert that one side, meaning the Unitarian side, "has had immensely and almost overwhelmingly the advantage of the other." I should be inclined exactly to reverse the statement. As I have before remarked, I have always found the doctrine of the Trinity so perplexing, that I have read over and over again all the arguments I could find in its favor, and no one but myself can know how I have struggled to continue a Trinitarian.

Your letter goes on to say, "you ought also to consider the influence of your course upon others, upon the cause of religion, and upon your publications, especially the volume of poems entitled 'The Parted Family,' as well as upon the feelings and happiness of your friends. Not that any of these considerations, nor all of them, should suppress or seriously interfere with sincere inquiries after truth; but only with an unnecessary or premature declaration, which may have a use made of it by others, you perhaps do not at all anticipate, the

Digitized by Google

occurrence of which you may afterwards deeply regret, when it may be too late to repair it. We are all answerable for our influence, and though that fact should not be suffered to render us insincere, nor to suppress needful or useful inquiry, yet it should modify, qualify, and regulate the degree and manner of our disclosure to others of the results to which we may have arrived. This is, perhaps, one of those cases in which he that believeth should not make haste. I fear that many may be driven *from* the Bible, through indifference or disrelish of its contents, when they learn that you, *through* the Bible, have arrived at your present conclusions."

Your remarks in regard to the importance of our influence are just what they should be, and I trust will not be without their legitimate effect upon my mind. Yet I cannot hope that my friends will be able to appreciate fully the force and peculiarity of the circumstances by which I am surrounded, inasmuch as they themselves — by their affection for me, their zeal for what they regard to be fundamental truth, and their opposition to what they deem fundamental error — create those very circumstances. A crisis has come when it is absolutely necessary for me most sacredly and vigilantly to guard the right of private judgment, and conscientiously and fearlessly to avow my honest opinions. These remarks are not called forth, my dear father, by anything which *you* have said or done. If all my friends had pursued the calm and consistent course which your example should have prompted, I should not now be obliged continually to defend myself from

Digitized by Google

charges which their own misguided zeal has brought upon me.

I wish, my dear father, before I bring this letter to a close, to reply to a remark of yours which has given me some pain. "I deeply regret," you say, "to hear you speak in the manner you have done of such men as Scott and Newton." And further, in regard to Scott, you say, "I have concluded to make a remark or two on the apparent insincerity of Scott in not informing his readers of Whitby's change of views when he made quotations from his writings. I have usually considered Scott as so remarkably candid a writer, that I cannot have him reflected on without defending him where I find he is defensible. Scott quoted, I must presume, just as any one would do, from a book containing what he considered correct and valuable sentiments. I presume he meant neither to proclaim nor conceal the system embraced by Whitby, but to exhibit his argument, leaving his readers to judge of its conclusiveness, as well as of where it might be found."

If I have done Dr. Scott injustice, I am truly sorry for it; I meant not to speak disrespectfully of such a man; and in regard to Sir Isaac Newton,* I gave no opinion of my own, but merely mentioned where *his opinions* might be found, and then quoted what Professor Sparks had said in regard to the same subject.

* Since the above was written, it has occurred to me that perhaps you allude to the Rev. John Newton; for I recollect saying to you that I thought the influence of his high Calvinistic views had operated most injuriously upon the sensitive mind of the unfortunate Cowper.

Digitized by Google

I will now say, however, with all due modesty, *that it seems to me* that no one can read his "Historical Account of two Corruptions of Scripture," without believing him to have been a Unitarian; but different minds are differently constituted.*

* See Appendix I.

Digitized by Google

LETTER V.

INVESTIGATION NO CRIME.

My dear Father:

I am rejoiced to find that you do not, as some of my friends do, complain of me for having presumed to investigate opinions, when doubts of their truth had found their way into my mind. I was sure it would be so. I knew too well the remarkable honesty of your mind, to fear, *upon that particular ground*, your displeasure; and I am very much pleased to find I did not mistake you. In your letter the following passage occurs, and I thank you for it from my heart. You say, "I am, my daughter, not at all dissatisfied with you for inquiring after Truth, and embracing it wherever you find it; and you have an intellect that can distinguish between logic and sophistry." You then add, "But if such texts as those to which I have referred you can be logically disposed of, I wish to see the way in which such a work can be accomplished." Before this time you have received the letter in which I give my interpretation of those texts.

You speak of a remark I have made in regard to you, as though you feared it might be misunderstood;

Digitized by Google

and that some persons might think it argued an indifference, on your part, in regard to matters which I know you deem of vital importance. But I will let you speak for yourself. "You have made an observation," you say, "something like this, that I was not affected, as all your other relatives are, in view of the disclosures you have made concerning what is passing in your mind. This is true, however, I think, only in one particular. Perhaps all the rest are regretting that you are pursuing your present course of inquiry — that you are examining subjects, and reading books, with which they might prefer you should not meddle — into which they had rather you would not look. So far as *this single particular* is concerned, I do not feel thus. I am quite willing you should inquire after *Truth*, and embrace it wherever you may find it, though it counteract the whole current of your former thoughts, and overturn the whole fabric of your former views. I would hope you have a mind capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and argument from sophistry; and I hope that you have a candor and impartiality that will suffice to secure you from the wiles and fascinations of error, and an experience of grace in the heart that will preserve you from going far, and long, and fatally astray." These are noble views and sentiments, my father, worthy of a man, worthy of a Christian, worthy of *you*, and of your honest and noble soul. Such sentiments *must* secure the approbation of every candid and conscientious mind.

I wish I could convince my relatives and friends, and yourself in particular, that I have not been entirely

Digitized by Google

unmindful of that *caution* which it is so important at all times to observe, but most especially when we are about to take a momentous step, and to assume a new position. I will, however, bear witness to the fact that you have again and again, in the most solemn and urgent manner, lifted up your kindly warning voice, and advised continually the most cautious deliberation. At the risk of placing myself in an unamiable light before the public, — for I cannot and will not explain *all* the peculiar circumstances which have rendered *necessary* what has seemed to be a premature disclosure of my change of views, — at the risk, I repeat, of placing myself in an unamiable attitude, I will do all I can to exonerate you, my dear father, from the smallest share of blame in this matter; and I hereby declare that you have done all that paternal faithfulness could do, to hold me back from what you conceived to be the brink of a dangerous precipice. No one can read what you have written to me on this subject, without feeling and acknowledging that you have done your duty faithfully as a Christian parent, and a Christian minister. But, to make the point still more sure, I will here quote from your letters some of the warnings of which I have spoken.

In speaking of my present position, you say: — "It is a slippery road, and you will need to tread it with great care, caution, and prayer, or, ere you are aware, you may find yourself at an awful remove from the ark of safety. I feel no disposition to discourage you from a simple, sincere, and prayerful inquiry after Truth, but do not be too rapid in its discovery, espe-

Digitized by Google

cially not too rapid in announcing or acting upon your discoveries. Recollect, these views are *new*, and much of their interest may arise from their novelty." In another place you say: — "I would guard your imaginative mind and buoyant feelings against the dangers that may arise from the relief and happiness you have spoken of, in connection with the new views which have entered into your mind. Do not infer that you are certainly right, merely from that circumstance. I want you to have a cheerful religion, provided it is at the same time a safe and sound one." Again, you write: — "I wish you to practise no disguise nor insincerity. But I renew my urgent advice to you, on your account as well as on ours, not to be in haste. If your new apprehensions are well founded, nothing will be lost by deliberation, — by taking time to 'prove all things,' that you may 'hold fast' only to 'that which is good.'"

This is excellent advice, my dear father, and most gladly would I have satisfied my friends in regard to the time when my change of views should be made known. Indeed, I did not expect, *formally*, to make them known at all. I did not consider myself of consequence enough to render such a course necessary. If the "orthodox" community would have suffered me *quietly* to follow the dictates of my conscience, they should never have heard a word from me in regard to myself and my concerns. But strangers and friends have been pleased to interest themselves most extensively and diligently in my case, and it is their fault, and not mine, that any publicity at all has been

Digitized by Google

given to the matter. I have had no choice given me, I have been the victim of uncontrollable circumstances. The time came when I was obliged to make known, to my relatives at least, the process through which my mind was passing. And I have been blamed for not making it known, at least to you, before. I have been charged with showing disrespect *to you*, my father, because I did not from the first reveal to you the doubts which had entered my mind. Such a charge wrings my heart, and pains me more than I can express. Perhaps my silence was an error of judgment, it certainly was not one of intention. If I have done wrong in this thing, I ask your forgiveness, and I pray also for the forgiveness of my Heavenly Father.

If I could have confided my case to you *alone*, as perhaps I ought to have done, God knows how joyfully I would have done it, and how much it would have lessened the fearful weight of responsbility which oppressed me when I was groping my way alone. But I was, and still am, under the impression that it was best for me to study the New Testament in the solitude of my chamber; and before I had got entirely through the Gospel of John, I found myself, in regard to the nature of Christ, *firmly* on Unitarian ground. Then, after a good deal of thought, I sat down, and wrote the letter announcing to my mother and yourself my change of views, intending to hand it to you at the first suitable opportunity. That opportunity was not long in presenting itself. The fact soon became known to most of my relatives, but there were some circumstances which had caused such a fact to be *suspected* for some

Digitized by Google

time. One of these was my silence for several Sabbaths during the singing of the doxology, which, as I was a prominent member of the choir, could not but be observed. As soon as my change of sentiments became known, a storm arose, and burst upon my head, such as I have never before experienced, and hope never to experience again ; and it immediately became necessary for me to act with decision and independence, or lose what I prize above all other things, *my own self-respect, and the approbation of my conscience.* This is but a glance at the state of things which has rendered it necessary for me to take a decided stand, and assert those natural rights which belong to every individual, and which it is the sacred duty of every one jealously and vigilantly to protect. There are other circumstances connected with this subject, which, as I have said before, I will not name.

Not only, my dear father, have you urged me to practise caution, but you have faithfully portrayed the responsibility of my position, and the consequences which may result from my change of views. On this point you thus write : — " The views you have formerly expressed, the course you have pursued, the reputation you have acquired by your publications, the position you have occupied, and do occupy in this community, and your relation to myself, whose position for upwards of twenty years was still more prominent, place you in circumstances of weighty and peculiar responsibility." Again, after speaking of the " spirit that lives and breathes—that burns and glows " in the volume of poems from my pen, called " The

Digitized by Google

Parted Family," you ask, "Are you aware that an entire change in the current of your thoughts and feelings may be the result of the new tide that has begun to set in upon them? Have you renounced, or do you think of renouncing the sentiments and exercises that run through the interesting volume from your pen that has carried rich consolation to so many hearts?"

To these questions I answer, that I am by no means prepared to renounce "the sentiments and exercises"* which that volume contains. I have not renounced my confidence in God, nor in his Son, Jesus Christ. The words of consolation which fell from my Master's lips are as precious to me as ever, and would, I am confident, prove now, as they did then, amply sufficient to bear me triumphantly through any scene of sorrow through which I might be called to pass.

I will now bring this letter to a close, hoping and believing that what I have recorded here will abundantly prove to all who may peruse these pages, that nothing on your part has been left undone to deter me from pursuing the path which you deem a wrong and a dangerous one.

* If any one thinks that in consequence of becoming a Unitarian, the "sentiments and exercises" of the Christian heart must be renounced, I ask him to read candidly and carefully the *Sermons of Consolation*, by Dr. Greenwood, and he will see in what way and to what extent Unitarian Christians are comforted by their religious faith.

Digitized by Google

LETTER VI.

REMARKS UPON HONESTY.

My dear Father:

You speak like yourself, and like an honest man, who is "the noblest work of God," when you say, "I vastly prefer an honest Unitarian, who is so from conviction, however mistaken and even dangerous I may regard his sentiments, to men of pretended and even boasted orthodoxy, who hesitate not at prevarication, and even direct falsehood." And yet, dear father, it almost seems to me, that in your anxiety *lest I should go too far easily to retrace my steps*, even if I wished to do so, you are advising me to a course, which, under other circumstances, you would not consider exactly open or honest. Let me quote your words. In reference to the metrical doxologies you ask, "Is there no sense, no consistent and proper sense, in which you can say or even sing 'three in one.' Must you necessarily carry in your mind the idea of three objects of worship?" In answer to these questions I will reply that *there is a sense*, in which I believe in a Trinity. I believe that the Father manifests himself to the world through the Son, and operates upon the hearts of men

Digitized by Google

by the agency of his Holy Spirit. In this sense I *can* say "three in one." But this is not exactly to the point. I cannot sing the doxology because it *distinctly* represents these three as one *in another sense* — as three persons in one God — each as God, and the three as one God. The singing of the Trinitarian doxology is the distinguishing mark of a Trinitarian Church — a concise and regularly repeated confession of faith — the *Shibboleth* of Trinitarianism. Until it shall be generally known that I am a Unitarian, and that when I sing the doxology I give to it a Unitarian construction, I see no possible way in which I can honestly use it. *You* have taught me, my father, to be honest and independent. It is from you that I have learned with Christian boldness to assert and defend what I believe to be the truth, and I know you would not have me act otherwise. In endeavoring to persuade me that I can still sing the doxology, your only object is to deter me from exciting general remark by ceasing now to do what I have always hitherto done; *but I cannot conscientiously do it*, and I know that you would not wish me to silence the clamors, or even the *whispers* of conscience. You would be gratified, I have no doubt, and so would I, if I could perfectly agree with you in sentiment; but as long as I cannot do so, I know you would prefer that I should be honest, and say so. "God's truths," as you so sweetly and so truly say, "whatever on examination they may be found to be, are 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;' whatever may be the contradictions, inconsistencies, and even the immoralities of those who profess to embrace them.

Digitized by Google

To the law and to the testimony we must continually resort, saying, speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." Yes, my dear father, that is the true Christian spirit, a spirit of filial reverence for God and for his word; and if I ever hereafter discover that I have mistaken the teachings of that word, I again honestly declare that no worldly reproach, no bitter taunts, no charges of instability or love of notoriety, will deter me from confessing my mistakes and errors, and acknowledging what I believe to be truth. If I can find hereafter that in giving up the faith of my fathers, I have gone astray, in the face of an assembled, mocking, jeering world, I should not hesitate to retrace my steps.*

But I will introduce another subject. You appear to feel exceedingly dissatisfied with the alterations which have been made by Unitarians in the psalms and hyms of Dr. Watts. "There are several important topics," you remark, upon which the hymn-book you have examined, "is deplorably deficient." And you add, that "in several instances they have so altered Watts, as to have weeded out portions and sentiments which he regarded as among the most vital and valuable. Unless," you observe, "since he exchanged earth for Heaven, he has greatly altered opinions familiar and precious to him in this world, I am inclined to think that, could he now rise from his bed of dust, he would loudly complain of and protest against the use they have made of the pruning knife."

It is asserted, my dear father, that before "he exchanged earth for Heaven" he *had* materially altered

* See Appendix K.

Digitized by Google

opinions once "familiar and precious to him." The proof upon this subject I have found in a condensed form in *Sparks's Inquiry*, and shall quote at large what he says upon the subject. I leave it to your candor to decide with how much truth the assertion is made; and if it can be proved to your satisfaction that Watts was himself desirous of making alterations in his hymns, you will not be so apt to find fault with those who have done it for him. The quotation from Professor Sparks is as follows: —

"A letter is extant which was written by the Rev. Samuel Merivale to Dr. Priestley, in which the sentiments of Dr. Lardner on the subject of Watts's opinions are expressed in the most unequivocal terms. In conversation with Mr. Merivale, as stated in the letter, this great man observed: 'I think Dr. Watts never was an Arian, to his honor be it spoken. When he first wrote of the Trinity, I reckon he believed three equal divine persons. But in the latter part of his life, and before he was seized with an imbecility of his faculties, he was a *Unitarian*. How he came to be so, I cannot certainly say; but I think it was the result of his own meditations on the Scriptures. He was very desirous to promote that opinion, and wrote a great deal upon the subject.'

"After this conversation, Mr. Merivale, wishing to obtain further information respecting Watts's unpublished papers, wrote a letter of inquiry to Dr. Lardner, from whom he received the following reply: —

"'I question whether you have any where in print Dr. Watts's last thoughts upon the Trinity. They were

Digitized by Google

known to very few. My nephew, Neal, an understanding gentleman, was intimate with Dr. Watts, and often with the family where he lived. Sometimes in an evening, when they were alone, he would talk to his friends in the family of his new thoughts concerning the person of Christ, and their great importance; and that, if he should be able to recommend them to the world, it would be the most considerable thing that ever he performed. My nephew, therefore, came to me and told me of it, and that the family was greatly concerned to hear him talk so much of the importance of these sentiments. I told my nephew, that Dr. Watts was right in saying they were important, but I was of opinion that he was unable to recommend them to the public, because he had never been used to a proper way of reasoning upon such a subject. So it proved. My nephew being executor, had the papers, and showed me some of them. Dr. Watts had written a good deal, but they were not fit to be published. *Dr. Watts's Last Thoughts were* COMPLETELY UNITARIAN.'*

"These facts," continues Professor Sparks, "are too plain and conclusive to need comment. They rest on the authority of Lardner, and they could not rest on a higher. He barely stated what he saw and knew. Prove Lardner to have been guilty of a deliberate falsehood, or mistaken in a case where he had every possible opportunity of knowing the truth, and you will invalidate his testimony. Till this be done, no one can rightfully refuse his assent to the position it establishes; which is,

* See the whole of Mr. Merivale's letter in Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey, p. 216.

Digitized by Google

that the unpublished papers of Watts clearly showed him to have been a Unitarian.

"But we need not recur to unpublished writings. Enough may be found in print to convince us, that he was not a Trinitarian, whatever else he may have been. In his *Solemn Address to the Deity* he speaks as follows: 'Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, *in any one plain Scripture*, to have informed me which of the different opinions about the holy trinity, among the contending parties of Christians, had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction and joy, my unbiassed heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly, *in any single text*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three real distinct persons in the divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many *strong fears of assenting to the mere inventions of men*, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased to express and include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out, and with certainty infer this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and engrafted it into my soul.

"'But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult, and so abstruse a doctrine as this,

Digitized by Google

in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtleties of disputes, and endless mazes of darkness. And can this *strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God*, be so necessary and so important a part of that Christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understandings ?'

"Three things," observes Mr. Sparks, "are obvious from these extracts. *First*, that Watts did not believe the Trinity, as usually understood, to be 'plainly taught in any single text;' *secondly*, that in his mind it was not so expressed in the Scriptures at large, as to be intelligible to 'reason and conscience;' and *thirdly*, that the 'strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God,' is not a 'necessary and important part of the Christian doctrine,' whatever may be thought of its reality. Is there a Trinitarian of the present day, who will assent to either of these propositions ?"

Mr. Sparks goes on to give extracts from Dr. Watts's own writings, which, I think fully prove him to have been a Unitarian when he wrote them, and they were written long after his psalms and hymns. The extracts are too long to be inserted here, but if you are curious upon the subject, you can consult the work of Professor Sparks, called *An Inquiry into the comparative moral tendency of Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrines;* and in the chapter entitled *Sentiments and Morals of English Unitarians*, you will find all that

Digitized by Google

he says in regard to Dr. Watts and others. But I intend, though I cannot quote the whole, still to give some further extracts.

"We have yet a testimony," says Sparks, "from Dr. Watts's own mouth. In a letter to the Rev. Dr. Colman of Boston, written in 1747, he speaks as follows. 'I am glad my book of *Useful Questions* came safe to your hand. I think I have said everything concerning the Son of God, which Scripture says; *but I could not go so far as to say, with some of our orthodox divines, that the Son is equal with the Father;* because our Lord himself expressly says, The Father is greater than I.'* Shall we still persist," inquires Mr. Sparks, with good reason, "Shall we still persist, that Dr. Watts was a Trinitarian, and that when he said the Father and Son *are not equal*, he meant directly the contrary?"

We now come to the subject of Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns. In regard to these, Mr. Sparks says: "They certainly contain sufficient evidence that he was a Trinitarian when he wrote them, but we know his mind was not stationary, for he afterwards 'thanked God, that he had learned to retract his former sentiments, and change them, when, upon stricter search and review, they appeared less agreeable to the divine standard of faith.' Now we have already seen, that this was the case in regard to the Trinity; and you are doubtless not ignorant of the fact, that he was desirous

* Memoirs of Dr. Watts, Appendix, p. 19. The original of this letter I believe is retained among the files of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Digitized by Google

long before his death of suppressing or altering parts of his Psalms and Hymns, but was prevented by circumstances wholly beyond his control."

"Mr. Tompkins had very freely pointed out to him the impropriety of sanctioning with his name doxologies to the Trinity, and especially to the Holy Spirit, since he had declared his belief, that the Spirit was not a separate being, and that such ascriptions of praise were not authorized in Scripture. In reply, Dr. Watts writes: 'I freely answer, I wish some things were corrected. But the question with me is this. As I wrote them in sincerity at that time, is it not more for the edification of Christians, and the glory of God, to let them stand, than to ruin the usefulness of the whole book, by correcting them now, and perhaps bring further and false suspicions on my present opinions? Besides, I might tell you, that of all the books I have written, that particular copy is not mine. I sold it for a trifle to Mr. Lawrence near thirty years ago, and his posterity make money of it to this very day, and I can scarce claim a right to make any alteration in the book, which would injure the sale of it.'* And again, he replied to Mr. Grove, who suggested alterations, that 'he *should be glad to do it*, but it was out of his power, for he had parted with the copy, and the bookseller would not suffer any such alterations.' These testimonies are enough to show why Watts should desist from an attempt to make such alterations, as his change of sentiments would seem to require. At least they are such reasons as *he* thought satisfactory."

* Memoirs of Dr. Watts, Appendix, p. 144; as quoted from Palmer.

Digitized by Google

But, my dear father, they would not, the first of them at least, satisfy me, nor, unless I am much mistaken in my views of your character, would it satisfy you. It is about upon a par with the reason given by some of my friends why I should conceal my present opinions; namely, because the knowledge of such a change of sentiment would undo all the good which, by the blessing of God, I have ever been able to do by my writings. It sounds very much like advising me to do evil that good may come.

But to return. "It is evident through the whole," says Sparks, "that Watts was searching for the best reasons to quiet his mind in a case of necessity. To alter his hymns was out of his power; he regretted this misfortune, but as it was not to be remedied, he was willing to contemplate it in its most favorable aspect. The main thing to our present purpose is, that he acknowledged a desire to make alterations, and never in any shape defended the Trinitarian parts of his hymns. In fact, had he believed in these parts, the discussion could not have commenced."

Digitized by Google

LETTER VII.

AN EXPLANATION.

My dear Father:

In your last communication you say: "Though somewhat doubtful, after your annunciation that you had settled two months ago the matter, which I supposed might still be in some degree in question, whether I had better resume my pen, I have notwithstanding done so, that I may have the satisfaction hereafter that will arise from the reflection of having done all in my power, not so much to influence and control your decisions, as to aid and direct your inquiries."

I did not mean, my dear father, to express myself with arrogant confidence; I was merely giving a reason why I called myself a Unitarian. I intended it as a reply to what you had said in regard to collateral doctrines; and I was endeavoring to establish the point, which was clear to my own mind, namely, that, whatever might be my views upon other topics, while I believed in the absolute and unqualified unity of God, I was certainly a Unitarian; and *this point*, I informed you, had been settled, *in my own mind*, for the space of two months or more. I am not so settled in any

Digitized by Google

opinion, that I am not willing to hear and candidly to weigh any arguments which may be presented for a different belief.

You say, "it is but too evident that you have had before you the entire strength of one side of the question, the ablest productions of the most powerful minds which have been embarked in this discussion. So far, at least, as human authors have been your resource, one side has had immensely and overwhelmingly the advantage of the other. If your mind had not been made up, as you seem to say it has, I should like you to have read Dr. Miller's Letters on Unitarianism, and Professor Stuart's Letters to Dr. Channing. In the former of these, I am inclined to think, you will meet with a different exhibition of the opinions of early and primitive Christians, from that to which you have been recently listening, and to which you have, perhaps, acceded as correct."

You have accordingly, since writing what I have quoted above, sent me a copy of Miller's Letters, which I have carefully read. I do not find that his "exhibition of the opinions of early and primitive Christians" at all overthrows the opinion which I have seen, as I think, established by other writers,—namely, that the early Fathers did not believe that the Trinity was taught in the Scriptures, and that those who believed in and contended for this doctrine themselves, did not receive it *as it is received at the present day.* I have neither time nor strength to enlarge upon this point, but will only say, that Priestley's *History of Early Opinions* contains very satisfactory evidence in

Digitized by Google

favor of my position, taken from the writings of the early Fathers themselves.

You seem to be offended because Unitarians insist that such a doctrine as that of the Trinity ought to be *explicitly* stated in the Bible before we can be required to receive it, and much more, before we can regard it as fundamental. But if Unitarians feel in this way, as I confess they do, it is precisely as your favorite, Dr. Watts, felt. For proof of this, read again his prayer to the Deity, as quoted in my last letter. But I will quote from your letter. "Unitarians are right," you observe, "in saying that important doctrines will be frequently inculcated in the Scriptures, but," you ask, "are they not wrong in insisting that they must be presented precisely in that form which they choose to prescribe, and that their phraseology must be used?"

Now this is by no means what Unitarians insist upon. They only insist that every *fundamental* doctrine must be capable of being *stated* in Bible phraseology. Any proposition, that is of merely human origin, and which cannot be explicitly stated in the words of the inspired volume, they would not consider authoritative; let such a proposition emanate either from a Unitarian or a Trinitarian source.

Again, you say: "If worship to Christ is commanded, — if men and angels are represented (and who can doubt that they are?) as worshipping him, — if the titles, or the attributes, or the works ascribed to God are attributed to him, is it not *tantamount* to what they profess to want?"

I acknowledge that it might be so *if* the word wor-

Digitized by Google

ship was always used *in one sense*, or if Trinitarians and Unitarians always used it in the same sense. But *both* of them acknowledge that in the Bible it is not *always* used in the same sense, that is, to denote supreme homage. There is then no other way than for each one to determine *the sense* in which the word is used in each particular instance, by other portions of Scripture about which there can be no doubt or difference of opinion. There remains, then, the second part of your question, "if the titles, &c." And here again we differ as to our premises, and cannot, of course, come to the same conclusion. Unitarians do not believe that the "titles," "attributes," or "works ascribed to God are attributed to Christ," in the same way or in the same sense. I will not enlarge upon this point here, because it has been fully discussed elsewhere.

In another part of your letter you make the following inquiries. "Have you become so far acquainted with the productions of Unitarians, as to satisfy yourself that, the Trinity excepted, in all other respects they and we are, and ought to be, one people? If you have, I most heartily rejoice at it, and I long to partake of the discovery. Do they believe, as you have been accustomed to hear from paternal and other lips, and accustomed, as I suppose, to believe and feel too,— do they believe in the lost and depraved condition of human nature, in the necessity and nature of the atonement, in the constituents and evidences of regeneration, in the *cross* of Christ, in self-denial and sacrifices, in non-conformity to the world, and in heavenly-mindedness and other kindred subjects, as you have been accustomed

Digitized by Google

to regard these matters? If so, it is high time we should come together, high time for Trinitarians to confess that they have injured and slandered their Unitarian brethren. I, for one, shall have very much to repent of, to ask God's and their forgiveness for, and to forsake. And I am ready to do all these things, and to do so with cheerfulness, if any of them can convince me that I have wronged them. I have condemned them in days past, but not, as one of their writers expresses it, 'without a hearing,' nor 'from the unfriendly representations of others.' If I have (and I certainly have) borne testimony against them, it has been 'with a good conscience.' But I think I have ever been, and still am, ready to do them ample justice."

My dear father, no one, who knows you as I do, would doubt this for a moment. And yet while men make *their particular views* of the doctrines taught in the Bible necessary to salvation, I do not see how those who differ in their views can come together. The Unitarian is willing to give the name of Christian to all who acknowledge Christ as their divinely commissioned Teacher and Head. "We may safely affirm," says a Unitarian writer, "that the Scriptural sense of the term Christian, to which it might be wise for Christians to adhere, is neither more nor less than that of a disciple of Christ,— of one who, from a sincere belief in Christ's divine commission and Messiaship, chooses him for his instructor and his Lord." But others are not willing to use the term Christian as it is used in the Bible.

In regard to the inquiries you make concerning Unitarians, namely, whether I have found out that there is

Digitized by Google

no difference between them and Trinitarians upon certain doctrinal points, I answer that I think there is a great difference; but differences are to be expected while men's minds are so variously constituted. Upon fundamental points, that is, those points, a belief in which is necessary to salvation, I do not think there can be any difference of opinion, because I believe they are so plainly revealed that no *honest* inquirer can mistake them. In regard to all the points mentioned by you in the extract I have made from your letter, Unitarians have a certain belief; it is rather a different belief from yours, but they think, as you do of your views; namely, that they are sustained by the Bible.

"We think," says the Rev. Orville Dewey, "that they (that is, Trinitarians) ought to listen to us, when we make the plea, once their own,"—he had been alluding to the fact that all Protestants had once to defend themselves from charges of heresy;—"that we believe, according to our honest understanding of their import, all things that are written in the Holy Scriptures.

"There is one circumstance which makes the statement of this defence peculiarly pertinent and proper for *us*. And that is, the delicacy which has been felt by our writers and preachers about the use of terms. When we found, for instance, that the phrase, 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' and that the words *atonement*, *regeneration*, *election*, with some others, were appropriated by the popular creeds, and stood in prevailing usage, for orthodox doctrines, we hesitated about the free use of them. It was not because we hesitated

Digitized by Google

about the meaning which Scripture gave to them, but about the meaning which common usage had fixed upon them. *We believed in the things themselves*, we believed in the words as they stood in the Bible, but not as they stood in other books. But, finding that, *whenever we used these terms*, we were charged, even as our great Master himself was, with 'deceiving the people,' and not anxious to dispute about words, we gave up the familiar use of a portion of the Scriptural phraseology. Whether we ought, in justice to ourselves, so to have done, is not now the question. We did so; and the consequence has been, that the body of the people, not often hearing from our pulpits *the contested words and phrases*, not often hearing the words *propitiation*, *sacrifice*, *the natural man*, *the new birth*, and *the Spirit of God*,—hold themselves doubly warranted in charging us with a defection from the faith of Scripture."

You will perhaps recollect, my dear father, expressing your alarm, when I told you, after hearing a Unitarian sermon upon *regeneration*, that I thought it a faithful and Scriptural one, only I missed some of the *technicalities*, to which I had been accustomed. The *substance*, I thought, was there, though presented in a new shape; the solid truth I discovered, though divested of its orthodox and popular dress and drapery.

But further, after asserting the firm belief of Unitarians in the Scriptures, Mr. Dewey says, "in the first place, we believe 'in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost.' This was the simple, primitive creed of the Christians; and it were well if men had been content to receive it in its simplicity. As a

Digitized by Google

creed, it was directed to be introduced into the form of baptism. The rite of baptism was appropriated to the profession of Christianity. The converts were to be baptized into the acknowledgment of the Christian religion; 'baptized into the name,' that is, into the acknowledgment 'of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

After enlarging upon this baptismal form, he says, *secondly*, "We believe in the atonement. That is to say, we believe in what that word, and similar words, mean in the New Testament. We take not the responsibility of supporting the popular interpretations. They are various, and are constantly varying, and are without authority, as much as they are without uniformity and consistency. What the divine record says, we believe *according to the best understanding we can form of its import.*

After declaring that Unitarians believe the death of Christ was *an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation*, he says: "But now the question is, what *is* an atonement, a sacrifice, a propitiation? And this is the difficult question,—a question to the proper solution of which much thought, much cautious discrimination, much criticism, much knowledge, and especially of the ancient Hebrew sacrifices, is necessary. Can we not 'receive the atonement,' without this knowledge, this criticism, this deep philosophy? What then is to become of the mass of mankind, of the body of Christians? Can we not savingly 'receive the atonement' unless we adopt some particular explanation, some peculiar creed, concerning it? Who will dare to

Digitized by Google

answer this question in the negative, when he knows that the Christian world is filled with differences of opinion concerning it? The atonement is one thing; the gracious interposition of Christ in our behalf; the doing of all that was necessary to be done, to provide the means and the way for our salvation— this is one thing; *in this we all believe.* The philosophy, the theory, the theology (so to speak) of the atonement, is another thing."

"In the *third* place," says he, "we believe in human depravity; and a very serious and saddening belief it is, too, that we hold on this point. We believe in the very great depravity of mankind, in the exceeding *depravation* of human nature. We believe that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'" Then, after assenting to several of the strongest texts upon this point, he says: "We believe that this was not intended to be taken without qualifications, for Paul, as we shall soon have occasion to observe, made qualifications. First, it is not the depravity of *nature*, in which we believe. Human nature—nature as it exists in the bosom of an infant—is nothing else but capability; capability of good as well as evil, though more likely, from its exposures, to be evil than good. Secondly, it is not in the unlimited application of Paul's language, that we believe. When he said 'No, not one,' he did not mean to say that there was not one good man in the world. He believed that there *were* good men. Neither, thirdly, do we believe in what is technically called 'total depravity'; that is to say, a total and absolute destitution of everything right, even in bad men."

Digitized by Google

"From this depraved condition, we believe, in the fourth place, that men are to be recovered, by a process, which is termed in the Scriptures, *regeneration*. We believe in regeneration, or the new birth. That is to say, we believe, not in all the ideas which men have affixed to those words, but in what we understand the sacred writers to mean by them. We believe that, 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' that 'he must be new created in Christ Jesus;' that 'old things must pass away, and all things become new.' We certainly think that these phrases applied with peculiar force to the condition of people, who were not only to be converted from their sins, but from the very forms of religion in which they had been brought up; and we know indeed that the phrase 'new birth' did, according to the usage of the language in those days, apply especially to the bare fact of proselytism. But we believe that men are still to be converted from their sins, and that this is a change of the most urgent necessity, and of the most unspeakable importance.

"We believe, too, in the fifth place, in the doctrine of election. That is to say, again, we believe in what the Scriptures, as we understand them, mean by that word. The truth is, that the doctrine of election is a matter either of scholastic subtilty, or of presumptuous curiosity, with which, as we apprehend, we have but very little to do. Secret things belong to God. We believe in what the Bible teaches of God's infinite and eternal foreknowledge. We believe in election, not in selection. We believe in foreknowledge, not in fate.

Digitized by Google

"In the sixth place, we believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. We believe that sin must ever produce misery, and that holiness must ever produce happiness. But there has been that attempt to give definiteness to the indefinite language of the Bible on this subject, to measure the precise extent of those words which spread the vastness of the unknown futurity before us; and with this system of artificial criticism, the popular ignorance of Oriental figures and metaphors has so combined to fix a specific meaning on the phraseology in question, that it is difficult to use it without constant explanation. 'Life everlasting,' and 'everlasting fire,' the mansions of rest, and the worm that never dieth, are phrases fraught with a just and reasonable, but, at the same time, vast and indefinite import. We believe, then, in a heaven and a hell. We believe there is more to be feared hereafter than any man ever feared, and more to be hoped than any man ever hoped.

"Once more, and finally, we believe in the supreme and all-absorbing importance of religion. The soul's concern is the great concern, &c." But I must bring these extracts to a close, for I find I cannot do justice to Mr. Dewey without occupying more space than my limits will allow. I must refer you to the work itself,* where you will find much that *must* interest you. It is a delightful book. I will only add, that the sentiments contained in these extracts are such as I have met with in every Unitarian work which I have read.

* Dewey's Controversial Sermons, published in 1840.

Digitized by Google

LETTER VIII.

INQUIRIES ANSWERED.

My dear Father:

I have arisen at the hour of four to indite a brief reply to that part of the letter you are writing me which has been received. I feel so much exhausted from the amount of reading and writing in which I have been engaged for the last two months, that my strength soon fails; and therefore, my dear father, you must excuse me if I do not write as fully as you might expect or wish. In reply to the argument on your second page, commencing with — "what if they are worshipping three Gods," — let me refer you to an essay by James Foster, on "Fundamentals in Religion," contained in "Sparks's Collections" for May, 1825. It conveys a better answer than I have ability or strength to give you. Again, you ask, "where have you seen a great many exemplary Christians, according to what you have been taught, and what you believed you had *felt* of vital, experimental Christianity?" *In this sense*, in view of certain points of doctrine which I had been taught, and which I believed that every one must receive before he could be a Christian — I will answer, that I have not

Digitized by Google

seen them. But I have long ago learned to judge of a tree by its fruits; it is our only means of judging; it is the rule which our Saviour has given us, and must therefore be a correct rule. In this sense I *have* seen them. When I behold a person doing justly, loving mercy, and, as it seems to me, walking humbly with God — wherever I can thus recognise what appears to me *God's image in my fellow creatures* — my soul feels fellowship with such an one, however I may deem him mistaken in points of doctrine. It may be they are, as I have been, *ignorantly* wrong. Now it is conceded on all hands, so far as I have known — and I have heard the opinion often expressed by Trinitarians — that, *as a body*, the Unitarians are a remarkably moral people.* But, they say, that is their religion; they cultivate a high tone of moral feeling. Well, all will be inclined to acknowledge that this elevated tone of morality is an excellent thing, so far as it goes. Now, when I hear them aver, and when I read from the works of all their writers to whose pages I can get access, that this morality is the fruit of a sincere and *living* faith — by living faith I mean a faith which brings forth fruit — in the Lord Jesus Christ as one who comes to them with an almighty commission; with credentials from his Father and our Father, from his God and our God; with the same authority as if Jehovah himself had appeared on earth; I am ashamed and confounded that I have, without giving them even a hearing, without the slightest examination, been guilty of the

* See Appendix L.

Digitized by Google

grossest injustice towards them. I am, I solemnly repeat it, ashamed and confounded; may God forgive me. Such uncharitableness, however involuntary, the fruit of mistaken and narrow minded opinions, I feel has been a shade upon my character, a degradation to my soul; and I bless God for my great deliverance.

My first feeling, after reading some little tracts containing information concerning their faith, and written with a spirit of heavenly love and meekness, was an *inexpressible* relief to find I had been mistaken in regard to a numerous and respectable class of my fellow men; that they were not, *even in theory*, what I had thought them; and, though mingled it may be with self-upbraiding, a discovery like this cannot but be delightful, I will not merely say to any liberal and enlightened Christian, but to any humane mind, or human heart. You ask me, my dear father, if I now embody in what I term Christianity only the naturally amiable tempers and correct deportment of persons, who have no savor of devotion, who deny, and some of them even almost ridicule, that change taught by Christ to Nicodemus, and which I for a number of years have professed to believe in, and moreover to *feel*, not merely as an outward and moral, but as an inward, radical, and spiritual change. In answer to this I say *no*, my father. Those cannot be Christians who deny what Christ came to teach. Those are by no means my ideas of Christianity; and you will see, if you are willing to read what I send you, that these are not the views of Unitarians. I will refer you now to the following articles. In "Burnap's Expository Lectures," the article on

Digitized by Google

" Saving faith in Christ ; " an article of Dr. Channing's, entitled " Objections to Unitarian Christianity considered ; " the tract on Christian Salvation ; the article " On the nature of a Heavenly Conversation," in the number of " Sparks's Collections " for May, 1825 ; the tract entitled " The Unitarian's Answer ; " the one entitled " The Doctrine of Religious Experience ; " and " Mr. Whitman's Discourse on Regeneration."

If, my beloved father, you *should* feel that by any step I may feel myself bound to take, I am showing you *personal* disrespect, such a fact would add exquisitely and infinitely to my sufferings, *but it could not alter my views of duty.* This matter is between me and my God ; and, at my age, and under my circumstances, I am responsible to God *alone* for my actions. As the Almighty sees my heart, he knows, my father, how I love and venerate you ; he sees that you are the apple of mine eye ; but, in a case like the present, prayerfully considered under all its aspects, I will remember my Master's charge to his disciples, and call no man my father on the earth, for one is my Father, which is in Heaven. Matt. xxiii. 9.

I have gathered the opinions of a great many Unitarian writers from their books ; it is now my intention to hear the preaching of Dr. Gilman and such other Unitarians as may fall in my way, that I may judge of his and their opinions for myself. I consider that I am acting for eternity, and I *could* tell you of feelings which ought to rejoice your heart ; but I forbear, being afraid that you will ascribe them all to the strength of what you deem my strange delusion. Perhaps my

Digitized by Google

future life will prove, better than any thing I can say, *whether* the doctrines I now espouse will or will not bear fruit to the glory of God. I have decided to go on next Sabbath morning to the Unitarian Church, and have thought it honest and right to tell you so.

I have read carefully, and, I would add, prayerfully, the books which you have placed in my hands; but they have only served to strengthen me in the opinions I now hold. You will find in the two books — "Norton's Statement of Reasons," and "Burnap's Expository Lectures," — explanations of most of the texts you brought before my mind; and I would remark that, I did not obtain those books till after my views were changed and my letters written. "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all." Amen.

LINES ON LUKE XVIII. 29, 30.

"There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Father! I can leave them all,
At my much loved Master's call;
He refused not, for my sake,
Sorrow's bitter cup to take,
That to me he might commend
Love like thine, Almighty Friend!

Digitized by Google

He, who fainting thousands fed,
Had not where to lay his head;
He, of all thy sons the chief,
Lived a life of pain and grief;
He, the Lamb thou didst provide,
Willingly — to save us — died.

Come then, suffering! Welcome scorn!
Doubly blest are they who mourn!
Blessed while on earth they roam —
Blessed when they reach their home —
Welcome, loneliness and grief!
There's a hand can bring relief.

Fear and doubt, away, away!
See! the dawn of heavenly day
Brightens in the eastern skies!
There, O let me fix mine eyes!
See! that Sun brings perfect day!
Fear and doubt, away, away!

Digitized by Google

LETTER IX.

AN OVERFLOW OF FEELING.

My beloved Friend:

I have received, perused, and reperused your affectionate letters, and thank you for them. They were dictated, I know, by the most ardent love for me, and zeal for the honor and glory of the dear Redeemer. But they are altogether an appeal to my feelings, and are founded, I think, upon incorrect premises. And I will tell you why I say so. You write thus: "Crushed and almost heart-broken, my beloved friend, I have just risen from my knees, where, if ever my soul was poured out in prayer, it has been now for you, that God would, in his great mercy, for his dear Son's sake, and especially for your own soul's sake, even now arrest your hand before it tears the crown from the head of our glorious and exalted Saviour. O, how my heart clings to him when I see him thus sorely wounded in the house of his friends." My dear friend, the strength of your feelings has misled you. What an expression! "*Tears the crown!*" I speak the truth, and I weep while I write it, when I declare that I would sooner die than rob the blessed Saviour — my once crucified, but now

Digitized by Google

risen and glorified Lord, my Advocate, my Intercessor with the Father — of one particle of the honor and glory which is his due. Every word that the Bible speaks concerning him I believe to be *true*. I believe that "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." I *love* my Lord and Master in sincerity and in truth — "whom having not seen, I *love*; in whom, though now I see him not, yet *believing*, I *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*." I go to the Father only through him, because I believe that He is "the way, and the truth, and the life," and that "other foundation can no man lay." And when I arrive at Heaven, which I shall certainly do if I heartily strive to do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, I expect to unite with my dear sainted husband and son, and with "many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders — ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands — saying with a loud voice, Worthy is *the Lamb that was slain* to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" We read in 2 Pet. i. 17, that he "received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice from the *excellent* glory, (there is, we know, a glory that *excelleth*,) this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Why may we not say to that *Son* of God, "Thou art worthy to receive, &c.?"

It is hard, my dear friend, to accuse me of tearing

Digitized by Google

the crown from my glorious Redeemer's head; and yet I know that the expression is dictated by your love to that Redeemer, and so I freely forgive it. Aye, more; I rejoice that you love him so well; but do not take it for granted that I do not love him, because I cannot render him the *supreme* homage which I *honestly* think belongs to God alone. *The crown is still upon his head;* he is at the head of the mediatorial kingdom, and will be there until that hour when "cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. And when he saith, all things are put under him, it is *manifest* that He is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that GOD may be *all in all.*" It must take *a very explicit statement* of the doctrine that there are three equal persons in one God, to set aside a text so full, so *unqualified*, so clear as this; given, as it seems to me, in consideration of our weakness and want of knowledge.

My friend thinks that I have not acted with due respect to my beloved parents in not going to them at first with my doubts and fears. At first sight it may appear so, but I see from the manner in which my first communication, which I meant should be kind and respectful, has been received by you all, except my

Digitized by Google

father, that I was right to take the course I have. Now do not misunderstand me — I am a reasonable being — I feel that I have been an honest, sincere, and industrious inquirer after truth, notwithstanding the insinuation that I have gone with my doubts to "*professed* friends on the other side." I know you will believe me when I declare that this is not true. In the *spirit* and *letter* of the declaration, *it is not true*. In the solitude of my own chamber, the Holy Scriptures, my own mind, and, I trust, the Spirit of God, have done the work. You have not received my communication in anger, but has any one a *right* to take it for granted that I have relied on my own strength ; have been under individual influence ; have been taken advantage of by Satan, or any other adversary ; have been given up to believe a strong delusion ; have *tried* to reason myself into a belief of Unitarianism ; have yielded to the pride of intellect ; have in heart wandered away from God ; have followed the leadings of my naturally proud and independent spirit ; have rejected a doctrine *because* it is incomprehensible ? Have *I* ever made this last assertion ? Did I say I rejected the doctrine of the Trinity *because* it was incomprehensible ? No, dear friend, I have not said so. I have rejected it because I cannot find it in the Bible. If I could satisfy myself that it was there, I would instantly receive it, however incomprehensible.*

Were I disposed to retort, I might say that those

* The *modern* doctrine of the Trinity is, to me, so plainly a contradiction, that I deem it *impossible* it could be found in a revelation from God.

Digitized by Google

who receive the doctrine of the Trinity are the persons who are depending upon human reason. It appears to me they fall into two strange and opposite errors. They first construct the doctrine upon inference and human reason, and then prostrate reason to receive it. I do not take it for granted that those who differ from me must of necessity be wrong, and in a soul-ruining error; I only say that I cannot see as they do. What fallible creature should dare to say that he *knows* he is right?

You all lay more stress upon the *consequences* of my change than upon anything else. Consequences should be considered fully, fairly, intently, and deliberately; but are they of the *first* importance? And are you *sure* that I lose sight of them altogether? I leave these questions with you; your answer to them I know will be right.

I wish you to place every argument before me; I want to be tested; I bless God for the late singular and providential occurrences in our immediate family circle; they came just at the right time. These circumstances, and a consideration of the consequences to which you have so feelingly and justly alluded, will doubtless lead me to caution; but you must go further before I can give up my opinions. You must convince me that they are unscriptural and untenable, and I will honestly and instantly renounce them. But when all you say amounts to this, we are right, and you are wrong — you are blind, but we can see; I acknowledge that I am not in a fair way to be convinced.

Digitized by Google

My friend says: "I bless God that I have not *talents* which lead me to reject all that I cannot understand." I have already said that this is not my reason for rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, but I bless God *that he has given me talents* which render me capable of judging for myself *what is revealed*; and for the right use of those talents I am accountable to God. I could comment on one or two texts in your letter — one of which is misquoted — and tell you in what light I view them, but you do not seem to wish any approach to argument, so I forbear.

I believe that for a long time I have been a follower of God, as a dear child, though not always a dutiful one, and often I have had occasion, like Peter, to weep bitterly over my sins. I believe that I have been in a doctrinal error all my life, but it was an *involuntary* one. I hope and believe that, as a true worshipper, I "worship *the Father* in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." I believe that I am Christ's, and "Christ is God's." I believe that "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but *with the precious blood of Christ*, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us, who *by him* do believe in God, that *raised him from the dead*, and *gave him glory*, that our faith and hope might be in GOD." I believe that Jesus is gone into Heaven, and is "on the right hand of God, (how can he be God, and be also on God's right hand?) angels, and authorities, and powers being *made* subject to him."

Digitized by Google

My friend begs me not to attempt to shake the faith of others. My friend ought to know me better. They have their Bibles, and I have mine. If they and I follow the *directions* therein contained, we shall all arrive at Heaven, where we shall see the Saviour as he is, and be forever with the Lord. But sooner than feel that I am an object of suspicion and fear in this respect, I would prefer to exile myself to the ends of the world, and live and die alone. And this reminds me that my friend uses this expression, "now more alone, if you persist." "Persist" in what, my dear friend? You have chosen an unfortunate word. It *sounds* as if you thought that I was *merely* taking this course because it was right in my own eyes. Is it wrong for me to "persist" in adhering to what are *are my honest opinions?* But I meant principally to turn your attention to the word *alone*. If I persist, *who* will be most alone, *you or I?* I know you do not do me the injustice to believe that I am without natural affection, and all these expressions I overlook, regarding them as an evidence of your love, though I could not in candor do otherwise than mention them. Dear friend, I want your prayers; I want your faithfulness; I want every *test* which you can give me; but judge not me, nor any one else, "that ye be not judged."

O my Heavenly Father! If I have done dishonor to thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased, I beseech thee to convince me of it by the illuminating influences of *thy* Holy Spirit. Thy Son has taught us how to pray, and has told us that whatever we shall ask the Father in his name, he will do it—*in thy Son's*

Digitized by Google

name I ask thee for direction at this most momentous era of my life. And while I pray to be made meek and lowly of heart, I thank thee, that, as I humbly hope, thou hast not given me the spirit of fear, "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." And may the talents which thou hast given me, be consecrated to thine honor and glory, and to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom; these things I ask in thy dear Son's name. Amen and Amen.

Digitized by Google

LETTER X.

UNITARIANS DO NOT DENY CHRIST.

My dear Sir,

You profess to have taken your pen in hand out of personal regard and concern for me; in this assertion I certainly believe you sincere, and therefore I thank you for your kind intentions. But your letter has been, on many accounts, very unsatisfactory and unpleasant. You take the broad ground that Trinitarians are the only believers in Christ's divinity and atonement. Now the truth or falsehood of this assertion depends entirely upon the ideas which are attached to the terms divinity and atonement. *You* use them *in one sense*, *Unitarians in another;* and their sense is as correct to them as yours is to you. And you go on to say — "Some, it is clear, *were* foretold as to be distinguished by this trait — denial of the Lord; and denial of Him as having *bought* them. Can you think of a party to whom such a phrase is equally applicable as that of the Unitarians, *if* their leading tenets be false? It does not say what men shall affirm, but only what they shall deny. Unitarianism is particularly distinguished, as you know, for its negations. It is not technically nor com-

Digitized by Google

monly used to express what any body *does* believe, so much as what they do *not* believe. It, by the usage of all religious society, (?) means those who *reject* evangelical doctrine.* Here then is something of a *prima facie* reason to suspect that you may be going wrong in joining *them*."

If, my dear Sir, Unitarians believe *as much* as the Bible reveals, they believe enough. This they profess to do. *All additions* to the doctrines taught in the word of God, *are errors* which ought to be abandoned; and Unitarians cannot find the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible, nor the doctrine of legal substitution, nor the other doctrines peculiar to Calvanism. So far as their system, *in comparison with yours*, is a system of negations, they rejoice in the fact; because they believe that your faith is encumbered with doctrines of human invention, not sanctioned by the word of God. Bear in mind then, that their system is one of negations only when compared with *your creed*, and not when compared with *the Bible*. They have as much right to assert that their system is the scriptural one as you have; and, as no human being is infallible, the question still remains *a question*, which each individual must decide for himself, according to his opportunity and ability to examine and understand the infallible word of God.

But Unitarians by no means admit that they do not believe in Christ's divinity and atonement. It is true that their belief on these points is *different* from yours, but it is just as real and valuable. They believe in the divinity of the Son of God, because God gave to his

* See Appendix, M.

Digitized by Google

Anointed his Spirit *without measure.** They believe in his *atonement*, because it is declared that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,

* On this point one of them, the Rev. A. B. Muzzey, thus writes: "The popular theology tells us that Jesus Christ is 'both God and man,' that he has accordingly 'two distinct natures.' *In one aspect*, this representation is correct. It is true, that two natures, a human and a divine, met in our Saviour. But it is not true, that they constituted one being. Christ, the man, was not united with a Christ, who is God, but with God, a separate, independent being, one who, unlike himself, is eternal, omniscient, and almighty. He was in God, and God was in him. The apostle Paul incites *the Christian* to become *a partaker of the divine nature*. Christ, *in this sense*, did partake of the divine nature. God was manifested in him; he was gifted with his Spirit without measure; it is his connection with God that makes him our Saviour; destroy that, and we have no Saviour left. So is it that two natures met in Christ." The following remarks are from an article from the pen of Dr. Channing, entitled, "Objections to Unitarian Christianity considered." He says: "It is objected to us that we deny *the divinity of Jesus Christ*. Now what does this objection mean? What are we to understand by the divinity of Christ? In the sense in which many Christians, and perhaps a majority, interpret it, we do not deny it, but believe it as firmly as themselves. We believe firmly in the *divinity* of Christ's mission and office; that he spoke with *divine* authority, and was a bright image of the *divine* perfections. We believe that *God dwelt in him*, manifested himself through him, and communicated to him his Spirit without measure. We believe that Jesus Christ was the most glorious display, expression, and representative of God to mankind, so that in seeing and knowing him, we see and know the invisible Father; so that when Christ came, God visited the world, and dwelt with men more conspicuously than at any former period. In Christ's words we hear God speaking; in his miracles we behold God acting; in his character and life we see an unsullied image of God's purity and love. We believe, then, in the *divinity* of Christ, as this term is often and properly used."

Digitized by Google

that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Nor do they deny the Lord as having *bought* them, any more than they deny that God redeemed the Israelites out of the hand of Pharaoh by *providing the means* for their escape. They believe that they *are* "bought with a price" — even the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot. They believe that the sinner is "reconciled to God by the death of his Son." And they believe with St. Paul, that if, when they were enemies, they were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, they shall be saved by his life. I will give an illustration of my meaning. Suppose a civil community to be in a state of rebellion against their lawful sovereign. It would be just in that King to visit them with summary vengeance; but he is a compassionate King, and is not willing that any should perish. After trying various means to reconcile them to his government, last of all he sends his Son; saying, "They will reverence my Son." The Son willingly undertakes this mission of mercy. It is the aim and object of his life to persuade the rebellious subjects of his kind and gracious Father to be reconciled to him, and submit themselves to his just and reasonable authority. Many and various are the proofs he gives them of his Father's long suffering and tender love; and in his own person he gives them a wonderful example of filial veneration and obedience. Such an example of filial devotion, of patience under suffering, and of unwearied compassion, the world has never seen. The same untiring love which fills the bosom of the King,

Digitized by Google

his Father, dwells in his own. To these rebellious subjects he represents his Father as their Father, long suffering, slow to anger, ready, upon certain reasonable conditions, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Some are touched by this exhibition of his own and his Father's love, and willingly resign themselves to his authority, and follow his guidance ; for he comes with "all power" to fulfil the objects of his mission. But the great majority reject his authority, and will not even credit the genuineness of his credentials. The more he presses his claims upon them, the more violent becomes their opposition. Finally, their madness and fury rise to its height, and they put to death, in the most shameful and painful manner, the only and well beloved Son of their merciful King — him who came only to do them good, and reconcile them to his Father's kind and reasonable rule. This bitter cup he drinks ; this dreadful death he meekly endures for the enemies of his Father and himself, crying in his agony, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

At this wonderful consummation, men stand amazed. One exclaims, "truly this was a righteous man ;" and all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that are done, smite their breasts, and return. Those who would not listen to him in life, now become reconciled by his death. And, being reconciled, they will naturally remember his wonderful example, his precepts, his commands, and thus be saved by his life. In after ages the story of his death will be read with wonder and gratitude, and will still be

Digitized by Google

efficacious for the reconciliation and salvation of mankind.

Those who had been appointed by the Son to spread the glad tidings of pardon, and to carry on the Father's benevolent design — the work of reconciliation — would now naturally preach *the cross*; would know nothing among men, but *the Son and Him crucified*. This would be, emphatically, their theme. In this would they glory. For this, in imitation of their Master, would they rejoice to suffer and to die. By believing in the cross, as held up to view by its ministers, all could still be rescued who are willing to be saved on the terms proposed by their sovereign.

Other foundation can no man lay. This is to save *us*. The death of Christ reconciles us to God, and his life teaches us how to live. Therefore we, Unitarians as well as Trinitarians, belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, *who has bought us with his blood*. Eternal life is the gift of the Father, *through him*. Oh, what a price He paid for us! Herein is love! Now hath the Father given Him power over all flesh, that *he* should give eternal life to as many as he hath given him.* If Christ, *under God*, hath given to us eternal life, to Christ, *under God*, we belong. We are Christ's, *and Christ is God's*. Christ says to his Father, "all mine are thine, and thine are mine." Now, my dear Sir, is it correct to say that Unitarians *reject* the atonement, only because they do not admit *your view of it?* If they believe that the death of Christ is efficacious in procuring their salvation, in this sense they believe that it

* John xvii. 2.

Digitized by Google

was thereby purchased. They believe that his death was necessary to produce such a change in *us*, that our Heavenly Father could pardon our sins according to his promise. Without the death of Christ we should not be so likely to be wrought upon to repent and reform, and without repentance and reformation we *could* not be pardoned. *Thus* is our redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, who, in a sense, and by a figure, bore our sins in his own body on the tree ; just as, in a sense, and by a figure, he took the infirmities, and bore the *sicknesses* of those whose maladies he removed while he sojourned among men.

Thus, my dear Sir, I have answered your question by affirming, that, whether the leading tenets of Unitarianism be true or *false*, they cannot be characterized by the fact of denying the Lord that bought them. Nor can they be said to reject Christ's divinity and atonement. Though you and they entertain very different views about these matters, they rejoice in the belief that their system is by far the most Scriptural and rational one.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XI.

THE SCRIPTURES HONOR CHRIST.

MY DEAR SIR:

YOU ask me to "consider deeply *whether the whole strain of the New Testament*, and of a great mass of passages in the Old, do not seem constructed on the principle of *honoring Christ* as much as possible. One," you say, "calls him 'Rabbi;' one, the Son of God, and King; another, 'one who knew all things;' another, his Lord and his God. There seems," you continue, "to have been no fear of overcharging the epithets of honor, or the ascriptions of power bestowed. Now the charge of Unitarianism is, plainly, that we think too much of Christ, and honor him too highly. But to honor him *very* highly is the spirit of all the New Testament."

I freely grant that epithets of honor and ascriptions of power, are, throughout the Bible, lavished upon our blessed Master; but that is no reason why we should confound him with the Supreme God, who is constantly spoken of as a distinct Being from the Messiah. How can the Son be the Father? We are no where told that they are two distinct persons in one Being. It is

Digitized by Google

true that Christ says, "I and my Father are one;" but he also, in prayer to his Father, explains his meaning by these remarkable words; "and the glory which *thou gavest me*, I have given *them*, that they may be one, *even as we are one*." And how could this be? Let our Lord reply; "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be" — not one in each other, but — "one in us."*

Further, Unitarians do *not* charge their orthodox brethren with giving too much honor to Christ; they charge them with *mistaking altogether* the declarations of the Bible concerning him. The Christ in whom Unitarians believe; who is a distinct being from the Supreme God; *the Son*, and *not* the Father; you do not *sufficiently* honor; therefore the charge made against you, by Unitarians, is just the reverse of the one you have put into their lips. What you call the human nature of Christ you certainly do not honor as the Unitarian honors his Master. When Christ declares, without qualification, that there was a certain day and hour of which he knew nothing, we, who are Unitarians, *believe* him. You, on the contrary, make him prevaricate, and, in one nature, deny what he certainly must have known in the other; and yet these two natures you declare to have been in constant and intimate union. You continually make him contradict himself. This is, in my view, sadly to *dishonor* him.

It is very natural that the Scriptures should seem to labor to honor Christ. It was to reveal the way of

* John xvii. 21, 22.

Digitized by Google

salvation *by Christ* that they were written. Patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, apostles, all hold up the Messiah to the view of a suffering, sinful world. In the glowing language of the east, they reveal the promised Saviour of mankind. Now, all that the Scriptures say of Christ Unitarians joyfully receive. They are not afraid of honoring their Master, but they *are* afraid of assigning to him that place which belongs to God alone.

You go on to say, "had I heard of some great unnatural attack of my friend's upon her venerable parents, personally, it could not have surprised me more. She virtually *attacks* our common Lord and Redeemer, as I must testify, by this retrocession from her allegiance to Him; lessens infinitely his claims on her; *lowers* his title to her confidence — his right to command — her motives to love him. He did not leave His divine throne for her, she has discovered; did not take upon himself her nature; did not *condescend* to be a man. She has no duty to Him as 'Lord of all;' discards and repudiates all zeal for Him as once relinquishing and now wielding all power in Heaven and on earth. *Is* this my once pious friend? The whole character, tone, and depth of her piety, how changed, if these tidings be true!"

My dear Sir, why should you seek to make my heart sad, when the Lord has not made it so? I thank God that such assertions cannot deprive me of that peace of conscience which I feel at this moment; but such allusions to my venerable parents as the one you have made above, do make me sad indeed. God knows how it has wrung my heart to give them pain; but He also

Digitized by Google

knows that I could not *conscientiously* act otherwise than I have done.

And what right have you to say that I have given up my allegiance to our common Lord? You require, before you will allow to me the title of Christian, far more than Christ or his apostles — the establishers of this religion — ever required. Now what right has any one to do this? In the New Testament I constantly find that men were commanded to believe that the Messiah was the *Son* of God; but in the present day a very different faith is required of us. Instead of saying, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," men are required to say, "I believe that thou art the living God himself." The former is the Unitarian faith, the latter the Trinitarian; which of them is the more scriptural belief, it appears to me is very plain.

You cannot produce one passage of Scripture in which the primitive teachers of Christianity required a belief in Jesus *as the Supreme Being*. They called upon men to believe and confess that Jesus was the Christ; that is, the Anointed; he who was to come; who was typified and promised throughout the Old Testament, as the great Mediator between God and man. He was to be received as the glorious Saviour of the world — anointed and sent of God for this purpose, and therefore clothed with the authority of God himself. A knowledge of his original nature was never made a requisite before men could receive the salvation he came to bring. It was enough that they recognized his divine authority, and joyfully submitted to it.

Digitized by Google

And what right have modern divines to require more than their Master ever did ?

Should a father send a messenger to a child in a distant country, would it be absolutely necessary for that child to discover the original standing and respectability of the messenger before he would receive and honor his father's message ? Would not his chief inquiry be, does he really come *from my father*, with full power and authority to deliver and enforce his will ? This point once satisfactorily ascertained, would not the message have equal weight whether the chosen messenger were originally rich or poor, honored or unknown ?

I do not mean to say that the original dignity and importance of the messenger would be a matter of no consequence. Far from it. But I do mean to assert that his original character would not affect the abstract question of his authority, and of the child's duty implicitly to obey what he is convinced is his father's message.* Now Christ comes to us as the messenger of God. Through Him God was manifested in the flesh. He came to usher in the Christian dispensation. Well, if I acknowledge his authority — let it proceed from what source it may — let it be original, or derived from the Father, as he expressly teaches us it is — *the effect* upon me is just the same ; and you have no right to take it for granted that I am no Christian, and that the whole character, tone, and depth of my piety are

* The Trinitarian Bishop Watson says, " His (Christ's) authority as a teacher, is the same, whether you suppose him to have been the Eternal God, or a being inferior to Him, but commissioned by Him."

Digitized by Google

changed, when I acknowledge Christ as my spiritual Head and Lord just as fully and heartily as ever I did. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand."

Digitized by Google

LETTER XII.

INSTABILITY.

My dear Sir :

You have pronounced me "*unstable*," and perhaps there are many of my other relatives and friends who are at this very moment applying to me the same injurious epithet. But my experience and observation, during my journey through life thus far, have convinced me that the possession of an inquiring, honest, independent mind — especially if such a mind be connected with an ardent temperament — will nearly always bring upon its possessor, at some time or other of his life, the charge of instability. *Progress* is emphatically the law of such a man's being.

Now, if, in childhood, he, as most others do, receives his opinions upon trust, in all probability the time will come when he will change those opinions. If, unfortunately, from the ardor of his feelings, or some peculiar circumstances of his life, he makes them known to the world before he has sufficiently examined and compared them with other and opposite opinions, he has the mortifying task before him of acknowledging himself to have been in error. But the truly honest mind will not be

Digitized by Google

deterred, by any feelings of mortification, from avowing any change, which, after mature deliberation, may have taken place; especially when it is considered that such a change is not *always* a mark of folly. There is an old Italian saying, which has passed into a proverb, with which such a man may comfort himself — il sabio muda conscio, il nescio no.*

It is often the case that a man may never have occasion to *suspect* his opinions, till providential circumstances place them before him in a new and startling light, and he sees defects and errors which had always remained hidden before. Then, if he be a man of the right stamp, he will march boldly up to the difficulty, and stare it in the face. Perhaps, upon close inspection, what appeared to be spots and blemishes will turn out to be only shadows upon a bright surface — shadows created by some external objects, which will disappear when those objects are removed, and leave the surface unsullied and glorious as before. Or, it may be, he will find that they are stains which cannot be removed; indicative of unsoundness in the material itself.

Free inquiry is, in general, no friend to old ideas and associations. And it behoves us to be cautious how, with ruthless hands, we remove the old landmarks, and lose sight of the natural boundaries and limits set for the human mind. But, on the other hand, those who have fettered themselves with human pledges, and imprisoned themselves within the boundaries of human creeds and systems, will find it extremely difficult, nay, almost

* A wise man changes his mind, a fool never.

Digitized by Google

impossible, to burst those fetters, however galling, or overstep those boundaries, however narrow and uncomfortable. They will even find it difficult to give due credit to the *motives* of those who can no longer remain thus fettered and imprisoned — who have made the effort, and freed themselves from bondage.

And here I cannot too earnestly enforce upon those who are intrusted with the training of youthful minds, the vast importance of giving them every opportunity and assistance in the candid and thorough examination of the various systems of Theology, professed throughout the world. Such a course will, at least, teach them *caution* in the formation and expression of their views, and it may save them from much future trouble and perplexity. Such an examination, taking place in early life, beneath the watchful eye of pure affection, will ever be a source of satisfaction to all concerned, provided that examination has been a thorough and *candid* one. Let every system of faith be brought to the test of Scripture, and not alone the faith professed by our progenitors.

If parents do not even allow their children to hear the opinions of those who differ from them; if, on the contrary, they anxiously and sedulously keep them in the dark; if, more especially, they ever let it be discovered that they *dread* and *fear* any freedom of inquiry — they may rest assured that they are likely to defeat the very ends at which they aim. They cannot always hold the veil before their children's eyes. The parent bird cannot always keep its offspring in the nest. The human mind loves freedom, and will not always

Digitized by Google

consent to be fettered. The time may come when opinions, which are merely the result of education, which have been taken upon trust, *which have never stood the test of free inquiry, and comparison with other opinions*, — the time, I say, may come, when these opinions shall be shaken. Then, a strong and unyielding foundation may be absolutely necessary to keep the *whole fabric* of faith from falling like the house which was built upon the sand.

Oh, it will then be a great mercy if the entire structure do not crumble into absolute ruin, never to be built again. It will be a great mercy, if, amid the general wreck, enough of the pure, uncrumbled material can be saved for the erection of another, and a more enduring structure. Such a result would be happy indeed. The new edifice of faith would perhaps be less imposing, because more simple, than the former one, but it would be not the less beautiful and valuable. On the contrary, no mind could estimate, no words could express its superior value. Its beautiful simplicity and unusual symetry would never cease to delight its fortunate possessor. Built of solid stone, and founded upon a rock, the rains might descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house, and it would not fall, because founded on a rock.

You remark : " Yours is not the first, nor the second, nor even the third case in which I have been called to mourn the fulfilment of God's awful prophecy in the persons of my own friends. Some valued friends have already proved that they were ' given up to strong delusion, to believe a lie,' by professing that other form of

Digitized by Google

Anti-Christ more suited to the constitution of their minds — called Popery. Widely as they seem to differ, they are, when sifted, varied developments of the same enmity to God's wonderful yet simple way. My own mode of accounting for it is, that it has not pleased God to enlighten them with his Holy Spirit."

To what "awful prophecy" do you allude in the first part of this extract? Is it that of being given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie? I suppose it must be. A little further on you say, that "it has not pleased God to enlighten them," that is, those who do not think as you do, "with his Holy Spirit." This is quite a flattering unction for a man to lay to his soul, I am willing to acknowledge. It would be a very convenient mode of settling differences of opinion, if we could only be certain *who* has the Spirit, and who has not. *But there is the rub.* If we could only decide upon some one living human being like ourselves, who, we were very sure, was under this special influence, whom we could consult, to whom we could explain the minutest shade of difference in our opinions — who could patiently listen to all we have to say, and give us precise answers, *not to be mistaken* — our differences might all be speedily and satisfactorily adjusted. Not one of us would object to making him the umpire between us. We could appeal to this infallible guide upon every topic which has ever divided the Christian world, and he would settle the matter at once. None of us would then object to having a "Pope." How delightful it would be to have such a guide at every step of our progress! He would tell us exactly what our Lord

Digitized by Google

meant when he said, "My Father is greater than I," and "of mine own self I can do nothing." If we differed concerning any of his own sayings, he would at once tell us precisely what his meaning was, and say to one, you are right,—and to another, you are wrong.

But, unfortunately, such a thing cannot be. We are not living in the times of the apostles. There is no Paul to whom a Christian church can write for information upon any particular point. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to certain favored individuals are no longer to be expected. In regard to this, all of us are upon a perfect equality. Therefore it becomes not any man to say, that such and such a person has not the Holy Spirit. It is an arrogant claim, which I, for one, am not willing to admit; nor will it, I venture to say, be admitted by others who differ from you. When I plainly perceive the *fruits* of the Spirit — "love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" — I joyfully acknowledge its existence. So far as we, frail and erring creatures, can venture to judge from evidence, I judge from what I see.

But, in regard to matters of *opinion*, the case is altered. Of all the millions in the world who differ in opinion, what one man possesses the greatest share of the Holy Spirit? All equally claim it; whose claims are the best? Why may not I have it as well as you? I ask for it, I wait for it, why may I not possess it? The bare assertion of another that my neighbor is not enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is, in my view, a poor reason for believing it to be so. Because your neigh-

Digitized by Google

bor cannot see as you do, you insist upon it, that God has blinded his eyes, that seeing he may see, and not perceive, &c. Ought any one but the Searcher of hearts himself to attempt the application of such a text? Ought a mortal to presume to apply it to his fellow mortal? If the *actions* of the life give evidence of the dominion of evil principles, we cannot help forming a judgment of the state of the heart — we are *allowed* to judge of men by their fruits. But with the religious *opinions* of others we have nothing to do in the way of judgment and condemnation. Our business lies with ourselves. We may think others wrong, but let us take care how we judge them harshly, and without hesitation declare that they belong to "Anti-Christ." Let us see to it that we are in the right; let us strain every nerve to arrive at the right spot; and "let every man be fully persuaded *in his own mind.*"

Digitized by Google

LETTER XIII.

MENTAL FREEDOM.

My dear Sir:

You are right in the supposition that what you are pleased to denominate one "form of Anti-Christ"—meaning Unitarianism—suits better the "peculiar constitution" of my mind, than "that other form" you call "Popery." I *do* love Unitarianism for the liberty it gives to every man to form his own opinions from the Bible, and, when he has formed, to express them. Nothing so little suits the "constitution" of an active mind as any kind or degree of mental thraldom. Nothing is so apt to weaken, to disease, to break down any constitution, physical or mental, as close and protracted confinement. There is no mental progress where there is mental slavery; and the active mind loves progress. It must be free, it must be at work, it must advance, or it will chafe and fret, and prey upon itself, as the newly imprisoned bird sometimes struggles till it dies.

The mind, too, which thinks for itself, is the only mind which understands and feels its own responsibility to God. And where this responsibility is felt, care

Digitized by Google

will be taken to avail itself of every assistance within its reach for the formation of correct opinions. The habit of assenting to the dictation of others in matters of religion is very much calculated to deaden our sense of responsibility, and to produce listlessness and inattention as to what we really do believe. I speak from my own knowledge, when I affirm it to be very generally the case in our orthodox churches, that the mass of private members are exceedingly ignorant of the speculative and peculiar points of their faith. This is the natural consequence of multiplying minor and unnecessary articles of belief. The few great fundamental articles of religion, such as all Christians can draw from their Bibles, the majority understand and appreciate, and, in general, can boldly and successfully advocate; but of the peculiar points of difference between the various sects of Christendom they are wofully ignorant.

In some respects this circumstance is not without its advantages. The practical, and what I would call fundamental doctrines of their religion exert their salutary influence upon their characters, while those speculative and metaphysical points, a belief in which *we* consider injurious to the character, lie comparatively inert and harmless. But, on the other hand, what *we* consider error is perpetuated from generation to generation, because its unsightly features are so generally hidden beneath a veil of ignorance, or altogether lost sight of through inattention and apathy. In former days, when I have had the doctrines of Calvinism pressed home upon me, I have insisted that such were not, and could not be, the doctrines of my church. But an attentive

Digitized by Google

study of the writings of Calvin himself have taught me otherwise.

If I had known what I was doing — if I had realized to what I was binding myself when I united with a branch of Christ's church holding the Calvinistic creed, I could never have done it. I do not say these things by way of apology for myself; I only mention them as facts—as not uncommon facts. I knew the Assembly's Catechism by heart at a very early age; it was faithfully taught me, with all its notes and references; but I was too young, light-hearted, and thoughtless, to receive from it any very definite ideas; and the words which were engraved upon my memory were mere sounds, conveying, to my mind, very little sense. It is now my business and my aim to forget them, though they often haunt me like phantoms of the past.

It was impossible that I could then understand, and fully receive, what has puzzled, and will ever continue to puzzle, older and wiser heads than mine. But I sincerely hope and trust that the unfortunate peculiarities of the system will, after a time, become entirely obsolete. May the period soon arrive! It will be a joyful day for Christendom, and I devoutly believe it will occasion joy in Heaven. But, my dear Sir, I have unconsciously broken the connection of my thoughts by giving way to a bright anticipation, and I will now resume my subject.

Once indoctrinated, and received within the pale of the church, the practical, useful part of my religion especially occupied my attention, and a blessed source of comfort and support I have found it, and do still find

Digitized by Google

it; and especially, now that it is stripped of its incumbrances, and I hold a rational, beautiful, and simple faith, it is far more dear to me than ever.

When my mind began to act for itself, I often felt perplexed about some of the doctrines of Calvinism. My friends can bear me witness, how, especially, the Calvinistic ideas of election and reprobation distressed and puzzled me at various periods of my life. The speculative portions of my faith were essentially opposed to my tastes and feelings; in a word — for you have supplied me with the exact idea — to the "*constitution*" of my mind. A want of harmony between my creed, and what, I am sure, were the *best* feelings of my heart, has always been a source of undefined uneasiness; so that, in order to enjoy my religion, which, from the pressure of exceedingly severe domestic afflictions, was necessary for me, I clung to the harmonious, practical, and true, and managed to keep out of sight those doctrines in which I could never fully acquiesce. The hearing of doctrinal, metaphysical sermons invariably created an indescribable uneasiness, jarred the sensitive framework of my mind, confused my intellect, and put all my feelings out of tune. And all this was not the less trying, because I never knew certainly what troubled me, or what had created the discord within. On the contrary, practical sermons, or those recognizing mainly the universally acknowledged, the *fundamental* doctrines of our holy religion, have ever been my solace and delight.

My life has thus been one of inward conflict. I have spent my years in struggling to believe what was

Digitized by Google

revolting to my common sense, but what my creed, when at length I did comprehend it, plainly told me I must believe, *or be lost forever*. I say my *creed* told me this; for that the majority of Calvinists *practically* hold such a shocking, exclusive faith — a faith which shuts out from Heaven all except themselves — I do not, will not, cannot believe.

Thus it will be seen that I have *not* suddenly arrived at the spot where I now stand. My friends have often been startled at what they deemed my temerity, when I would occasionally venture to express my suspicions that such and such doctrines might be erroneous. You yourself tell me that you confess you are not surprised at my change. You thought me some time ago "too prone to embark upon a sea for which," you assert, I "was not ballasted;" and you also remark, "that you saw my leaning, when you discovered my tendency to Arminianism." I remind you, my dear Sir, of all these circumstances, to shield myself from the charge of *haste* in changing my opinions, which has been so often, so industriously laid at my door; aye, and so harshly too.

Now the doctrine that, in consequence of the sin of another, man is brought into the world with a nature so *totally depraved* that he cannot possibly do anything that is right, his understanding so darkened that he cannot discern the plainest truths in the Bible, and yet that he is held responsible for the commission of sin — threatened with the pains of Hell unless he does what he has no power to do, and understands what he has no ability to understand — is a doctrine which never

Digitized by Google

seemed to me quite right. Not more right did the doctrine seem that one portion of the human race were elected to eternal misery, and the other portion to eternal happiness by a special, *unconditional* decree of God; and it also seemed strange to me that all mankind were exhorted to repent and be saved by the atonement of Christ, when that atonement was made only for a very small number. These and their kindred doctrines it has often seemed to me, in years gone by, could only be received by dethroning reason and common sense; and I have not been surprised to notice the curl upon the lip of the scorner, when these and similar doctrines have been held prominently forth from some of the pulpits of our land.

No, I repeat it, I have not suddenly arrived at my present position. Many years of dissatisfaction prepared the way for the change which has appeared to electrify my relatives and friends. Your superior discernment probably saved you from experiencing a similar shock. The powerful impressions of childhood, the strong cords of education and early association which held the system together, have not, I can assure both you and them, been sundered in a moment. One knot after another has been untied. I have felt the framework loosening, and trembling, and parting joint after joint, till, at length, it has fallen asunder. The fall seems, to others, sudden and woful. This is because the struggle through which I have for years been passing, could be known only to myself. Indeed, it can scarcely be said to have been known to myself; at any rate, I did not certainly know to what the conflict was tending.

Digitized by Google

It has been severe and disheartening. My best and brightest days have been sacrificed to what I now deem an erroneous creed; yet I scarcely know whether to regret that this has been the case. In one view of the subject, I can thank God for it all. It makes me charitable and forgiving towards those who hold this dreadful faith; who are not willing to grant me the name of Christian; who rank me with the adherents of "Anti-Christ," though I still regard Christ as my spiritual head, my master, and my Lord, and still recognise, with all my heart, his divine authority. It makes my present foundation like the solid rock, my present views definite and strong, my hopes firm and bright, my joys calm and enduring, my sufferings useful; and it makes me prize unspeakably that *liberty* wherewith Christ has made me free.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XIV.

CALVINISM.

My dear Sir:

I not long ago heard two orthodox divines of the Calvinistic school congratulating themselves upon the perfection of their system, remarking that they prized it because all the parts of it "dovetailed" together so nicely. Yes, Sir, it is certain they do dovetail in a beautiful manner, but it is only as a system of human invention that they do so; they certainly do not harmonize with human reason, nor, it is plain to me, with Scripture; certainly not with the character of God as it is revealed to us in the Bible.

But it gratifies me to observe that the Calvinists, with whom I am acquainted, are quite solicitous to soften down the rigid features of their system. It is an evidence that in the present age of the world it cannot be received in all its harshness, as Calvin himself taught it, nor as it has since been taught by some of the leading divines in this and other countries. What would the stern reformer say, could he know the modifications of his system common at the present day? A short time since I heard a very intelligent lady attempting to

Digitized by Google

shield it from reproach, and she avowed that she had no sympathy with "Calvinism run mad," as she termed the view of it which had been presented to her mind. But that insane Calvinism is by no means as insane as it was when Calvin gave it to the world. The truth is, Calvinists shrink with horror when the legitimate consequences of their system are portrayed before them; they are unwilling to admit the truth of the exhibition. Such persons, I take it, are Calvinists only in name. I hear frequent remonstrances against pushing these doctrines to extremes, but I cannot see that these extremes reach even as far as Calvin pushed them, or as far as they were carried by the Westminster divines, or President Edwards.*

Those who oppose Calvinism are generally charged with misrepresenting its doctrines; but a few extracts from the standard Calvinistic writers will suffice to show that this is not the case; that is, if language conveys the same meaning upon this subject that it does upon others. It is difficult to portray the horrors of Calvinism in stronger language than its own advocates have used. The Westminster Assembly's Catechism speaks of "the corruption of his (man's) nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, *disabled*, and *made opposite* to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually."

Calvin says, "even our very *natural faculties* are all depraved and contaminated. Whence it is that we are moved from within by no thought to do well. Wherefore," he goes on to say, "I detest those who ascribe

* See Appendix N.

Digitized by Google

to us *any* freedom of will, by which we may prepare ourselves to receive the grace of God, or by which we may of ourselves co-operate with the Holy Spirit, which may be given us." Then there is nothing which we can do; and what becomes of our responsibility? And is the last remark quoted from Calvin consistent with the benign spirit of Christianity? Where has our Master ever given us leave to *detest* those who differ from us in mere opinion? Oh, my dear Sir, let it be our aim to follow our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and not Calvin.

President Edwards says: "So long as men are in their natural state, they not only have no good thing, but *it is impossible* that they should have or do any good thing."

Do you say they are to blame for being in this state, or even for remaining in it? How are they to get out of it? President Edwards says that, while in this state, which is their *natural* state, it is impossible for them to do any good thing. How are they to blame for what it is, in the nature of things, *impossible* for them to do? If you insist that they are to blame, pray tell me how.

According to Calvinism, they cannot help themselves. They cannot repent and turn to God, as the Scriptures command "all men, everywhere," to do. What a mockery does this system make of the precious invitations which the gospel gives to "every creature?" If they are "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good," how can God entreat, aye, command them to become so? It is a bitter

Digitized by Google

mockery to press the claims of the gospel upon those who are so utterly helpless.

The God who will punish men for being and remaining in the condition in which they were born, and from which they have no ability to free themselves, cannot be the God of the Bible, who, we are told, is LOVE. To make the case still more desperate, they are, according to Calvin, the subjects of an absolute decree of the Almighty; a decree which he declared, at some moment when the horrible deductions from his premises stared him in the face, to be "a dreadful one." He informs us that the reprobate were created for this very purpose — that they might be examples of God's severity. He declares that "*they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning*, especially as this necessity is imposed upon them by the ordinance of God."

The Assembly's Catechism says, "the rest of mankind (that is, the non-elect) God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." And President Edwards asserts that God "decrees all sins."

Now if we are under such a government as this, how can God, even consistently with his attribute of justice, punish or reward us for anything we do? But the Catechism says, "the punishment of sin in the world to come is everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments, in soul

Digitized by Google

and body, without intermission, in Hell-fire forever." This punishment is the consequence of sin growing out of what Edwards calls the dreadful condition of *natural* man. He says that "natural men are held in the hands of God over the pit of Hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked; his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of his wrath in hell."—— "The devil is waiting for them; hell is gaping for them; the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up."

Addressing the unconverted, he says, "the God who holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours." I ask, my dear Sir, *is this* the God who is represented by the father in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son?

Calvin says, that "even infants bring their damnation with them from their mother's womb; for, although they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, they have the seed of it enclosed within them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin, so that it cannot be otherwise than odious and abominable to God." And yet our Saviour said of little children, "of such is the kingdom of Heaven!"

Digitized by Google

I could easily go on, my dear Sir, and quote page after page of such dreadful sentences, but you know as well as I do where they are to be found, and I long to turn my thoughts away from the sickening subject. It brings dark pictures of the past afresh to my mind — it recalls hours of anguish which I would forever forget. But I wished to do my part in shielding from the charge of *exaggeration* those who oppose Calvinism, and among these I now rank myself. With how much reason the charge is made, let the foregoing extracts decide.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XV.

GOD OUR FATHER.

My dear Sir:

If the doctrines of Calvinism are contrary to all our ideas of justice, at what an infinite remove are they from any idea of benevolence! Yet how benevolent is the character of God as it is represented to us in the Bible. He is there exhibited as our *Father*. And the love of a father to his child is but a faint emblem of the love of God to us. Our Saviour says, "if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* will your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him."

What thoughts of love, what sweet associations rush in upon the heart when we call our God by the tender name of Father! How could God more forcibly have impressed his love upon us? What child of a kind earthly father does not understand in a moment the endearing, the intimate relation he sustains to God, when he allows us to view Him as a Father? But, moreover, the Bible certainly reveals the Creator as a being of infinite justice and goodness. Nor is he merely just to Himself and to his law, he is just to his creatures.

Digitized by Google

But, you will say, the same Bible also reveals the truth that man, in consequence of Adam's sin, comes into the world totally depraved, and that he is liable to everlasting punishment in consequence of that *hereditary* depravity. *We* answer that such a doctrine cannot be taught in the same book which reveals God as good and just, because it is contrary to all our ideas of justice and goodness. You will tell me that no estimate can be formed of the character of God from our knowledge of these attributes as they exist in ourselves. But our conceptions of the attributes of God can be formed in no other way. The Bible is a special revelation *to us*, and its language must be in accordance with the principles of our nature. The only ideas we can form of moral and spiritual attributes, must be from ourselves. Why else were they revealed to us at all? We have no other means of judging. Because in us they are finite, and in God they are infinite, it does not follow that their *nature* may not be precisely the same.*

I acknowledge that the man who has so debased himself that he has no honor, no integrity, no justice, no benevolence, can know but little of such things in others — can form scarcely any idea of those attributes as they exist in the character of God or of his fellow men. But men so totally devoid of every correct feeling are not often found. Most men possess a share of these attributes, and some possess them in a very high degree.

The things around us take their complexion very much from the state of our own minds. If there be

* See Appendix O.

Digitized by Google

beauty within, we shall be very apt to discover beauty without; if there be loathsomeness and deformity within, everything around us will seem loathsome and deformed. A discontented mind sees no fitness nor beauty in anything, while a contented one gives its possessor "a continual feast." If we apply this law of the mind to our conceptions of God's character, we must acknowledge that the more perfect our character is, the more exalted will be our ideas of God's glorious attributes.

If then, our ideas of the character of God, so far as it has been revealed to us, must be founded upon those of our own nature, a system which does violence to these natural ideas is a system of doubt and confusion, and is apt to lead, on the one hand, to blind superstition, or, on the other, to thorough infidelity. That these results are not more universal, I ascribe to the fact that the practical truths which are mingled with such speculative errors, are all-powerful to preserve the majority of those who profess them from dangerous extremes. I have had the pleasure of knowing a great number of Calvinists who were cheerful, spontaneous, practical Christians; not, as I think, in consequence of their creed, but in spite of it. There are a great many persons in whom natural good sense, sound judgment, and the kindly influences of surrounding circumstances have operated to render inert and harmless the evil tendencies of their speculative belief. Many are theoretically wrong, while they are practically right.

You have told me also that "you cannot understand how, with my eyes about me, I can doubt the natural

Digitized by Google

and total depravity of all the human race. It is indeed very true that I see all around me too many convincing evidences of depravity not to believe in its *existence*. But that it is *innate* or *total*, I do not believe. I have made up my mind, after a diligent search for the Calvinistic doctrine of *original* sin, that such a doctrine is not to be found in the Bible, and that those passages which seem to teach it have been misapplied and misunderstood. They speak of the *fact* of its existence, not of its origin.

I think also that such a belief fosters immorality, and is exceedingly debasing to the mind. If we are taught from our earliest years that we are *by nature* entirely disposed to evil, and unable to do good, we shall be very apt to feel that we must content ourselves with a state of things which we cannot possibly remedy; and, on other subjects certainly, this would seem to be real philosophy. Naturally enough, we should conclude that any effort of ours to alter our miserable condition, would be entirely superfluous and useless.

It appears to me also that our incessant notice of the prevalence of evil arises from the fact that vice attracts this notice more than virtue. It strikes us, because it is *unnatural*. It interrupts the natural harmony of things, and introduces discord and confusion. Thus we notice vice because it disturbs us, and because it disturbs the course of moral nature, while virtue is in harmony with the general and common feeling — with the moral world around us. Vice attracts our notice because we do not expect it, while virtue is what we seem naturally to expect. Vice excites our surprise and reprehension,

Digitized by Google

while virtue, except, it may be, in some uncommon and splendid cases, is passed by as a matter of course. In short, virtue is the rule, and vice the exception.

Now if men are in the corrupt and helpless condition in which Calvinism places our unfortunate race, the exhibition of the smallest virtue would naturally be a matter of unbounded surprise. Yet how common, how almost universal, are the delightful domestic virtues! Where they do not exist, we feel that our *nature* has been outraged, and *its principles* violated. We call such cases *unnatural*. But if men are prone to evil, and only evil, and that continually, and so prone to it that they are entirely disabled from doing any good thing at all, why is there any redeeming trait? Why are not all men just as bad as they can be? Why are there any restraints upon society? If all are totally depraved, why are not all alike? Unless it be, as some person once remarked, that all are totally depraved, only some are *more totally* so than others.

And what possible good can degrading views of our nature do us? Surely they are not calculated to teach us humility; for he who regards himself as *naturally* degraded, has no reason to be humbled because of his degradation. He cannot help it, he is the victim of inexorable fate. He is driven on to his own ruin by a power which he cannot resist. He is a mere machine, performing faithfully the work for which he was created. If any one says that this is not Calvinism, I ask him to read the works of Calvin, and see. Surely there is no room for humility when a man is only fulfilling, by compulsion, his destiny. But, on the contrary, if he who

Digitized by Google

knows himself to be capable of great and noble things falls far short of fulfilling his glorious destiny, has he not cause to be humbled in the very dust? In the former case, the man's want of ability is certainly an excuse; in the latter, his ability affords strong ground for the deepest self-condemnation and humility.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XVI.

CONTEMPLATION OF VIRTUE BENEFICIAL.

My dear Sir:

Degrading views of our nature are certainly debasing to the mind. It is a natural law that we are apt to assimilate most thoroughly with those things which we contemplate most frequently. The contemplation of virtue is calculated to inspire the love of virtue, and to prompt to virtuous deeds; while he, who, even speculatively, becomes familiar with vice, is in danger of contamination and practical debasement. I believe no one will deny that this is a fundamental law of the mind; while some even go so far as to apply this law to our physical nature, and assert that the contemplation of the beautiful will produce beauty.

Taking, however, for granted, the existence of this mental law, I remark, that he who is constantly on the watch for evidences of human depravity, does himself a serious injury. In his anxiety to establish the truth of a theory, he may become, in his own person, its most conspicuous example. His theory may be, in himself, reduced to practice. But he who gladly hails every trait of God's image in his brother man — who feels a

Digitized by Google

thrill of joy when he hears of any action of generous self-sacrifice for the good of another — whose pulses throb at the recital of noble deeds; he who most watches for, and most gladly hails such delightful developments of human sympathy in others, is most sure to glow with sympathy himself, and to reflect the image of his benevolent God and Father. Such a person illumines and rejoices all around him.

And how comes it that there is always such a general burst of generous human feeling at the news of any great act of virtue, even if it come to us from the remotest corners of the earth? The first shout of joy and triumph is ever swelling higher and higher, and waxing louder and louder as it rolls onward towards the most distant lands. Through raging oceans, over rugged mountains, the tide of human feeling rolls, a pure and undivided stream, gathering tribute, and swelling as it goes. Thus, the world over, heart meets heart; and virtue receives, sooner or later, a sure reward. But, if men are totally depraved, they would naturally rejoice only in the triumph of vice.

What a pealing anthem of joy resounded through every land when the tidings came that, for conscience' sake, the ministers and people of the Free Church of Scotland had given up their beloved altars, and gone forth, poor and unsheltered, beneath the broad canopy of Heaven! What meant that universal shout? Of what was it a sign? Why did the heart beat quicker than was its wont, and the tear of emotion suffuse the eye? It was because the *motive* which impelled those men — let it even have been, as some suppose, a mistaken one

Digitized by Google

— found a glad response in every human breast. It was because they gave up all for conscience' sake.

In the life of the great and good Fenelon, a circumstance is related which gives an appropriate and capital illustration of the power of goodness to reach and soften the hardest hearts. The circumstance is thus narrated :

" The diocese of Cambrai was often the theatre of war, and experienced the cruel ravages of retreating and conquering armies. But an extraordinary respect was paid to Fenelon by the invaders of France. The English, the Germans, and the Dutch, rivalled the inhabitants of Cambrai in their veneration for the Archbishop. All distinctions of religion and sect, all feelings of hatred and jealousy that divided the nations, seemed to disappear in the presence of Fenelon. Military escorts were offered him for his personal security, but these he declined, and traversed the countries desolated by war, to visit his flock, trusting in the protection of God. In these visits, his way was marked by alms and benefactions. While he was among them the people seemed to enjoy peace in the midst of war."

Here is a beautiful illustration of the sovereign power of goodness. Enemies are made friends ; the evil passions engendered and fostered by war are changed into mildness and kind regard. And all this because of the inspiring presence of a *good* man !

" The virtues of Fenelon," says his biographer, " give his history the air of romance ; but his name will never die. Transports of joy were heard at Cambrai when his ashes were discovered, which, it was thought, had been scattered by the tempest of the revolution ;

Digitized by Google

and to this moment the Flemings call him 'the good Archbishop.'"

After all that I have said, my dear Sir, after plainly stating to you how Calvinism appears to me now, you will not wonder that I dread and fear it. I regard it almost as I would some venomous serpent, from whose fangs I have but narrowly escaped. Too long has it been coiling itself around my struggling spirit. That its poisonous fangs have not reached my vitals, I owe to that wonderful Providence of God which has protected me from harm, and, at length, provided a way of escape. He has given me strength to struggle on, till, at length, I have thrown the monster from me. I bless God for my escape.

You will perhaps think that this is unreasonably strong language; but if you only knew how I have suffered — how my whole life has been clouded over by this gloomy faith — how, even in moments when I have been joyfully welcoming the pure beams of the Sun of Righteousness, its dark cloud has frightened me from afar, its low, muttered tones of thunder have reached my ears, like a sound foreboding evil — you would not think my language too impassioned. Be it so or not, it is just as I feel.

My religion is my all. Without it, what should I be, or what should I do? Without it, how, in my early years, could I have borne the changes and sorrows which have fallen to my lot? I love my religion dearly, for it has been emphatically *my friend*. Then, if I have been able conscientiously to give up all that was dark and debasing about it, while I keep all that is bright

Digitized by Google

and elevating, how can I be too thankful? How can I speak too strongly? I sometimes wonder why, before I had proved the all-sustaining power of religion in my own experience, I did not give way to skepticism, and become the victim of infidelity. I cannot but remember the shocking doubts which sometimes found their way into my mind; doubts which sometimes made me miserable for weeks together. Rebellious and unworthy thoughts of God, my heavenly Father and Friend; how they used to haunt and torture me! They grew out of my creed. To a person of my "mental constitution," if I thought about it at all, it could not be otherwise. I could not teach myself to reconcile contradictions. I could not school myself to receive, what always seemed to me absurdities. I never examined them deeply. I *tried* to believe them, but tried without success; or, at most, it was a strange sort of belief, against my better judgment.

It was an extorted faith. I feared to believe otherwise. And soon the time came, when, under the pressure of deep affliction, religion became absolutely necessary to me. I clung therefore to the practical and truthful, shutting my eyes upon all the rest. I have, indeed, endeavored to indoctrinate myself — to *understand* what I thought I *must* believe, and to fill my mind with arguments for that belief; but I never before now *thoroughly* examined the question, whether those opinions were true. I never *myself*, and I confess it with sorrow, brought them meekly to the law and to the testimony, to judge, by my own reason, *whether they could be found there.* I was *afraid to doubt.* And in regard to *the Trinity*, I did not doubt till lately.

Digitized by Google

And I verily thought that Unitarians had scarcely any religion at all. I shrank with fear at the idea of attending one of their Churches on the Sabbath day. It seemed almost immorality to read one of their books. I knew and loved some of them, but I pitied their delusions, and wondered how they could be so blinded. The subject of our religious differences was generally carefully avoided, or I might have discovered that I was doing them sad injustice. I fear my inclination was to say to every Unitarian, "stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." I fear I often prayed in my heart the prayer of the Pharisee, saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this poor Unitarian." This is the legitimate result of Calvinism. I find that all rigid Calvinists are exceedingly exclusive in their creed, if not in their natural feelings.

Ah, my dear Sir, I have endured the tyranny of this faith too long not to dislike it now. I have heard of those who had endured captivity so long, that it had become a second nature to them, and was preferred to liberty. I have heard of the captive, who, when released, sighed for his bonds again. The glorious light of the unclouded sun was painful to his eye; the free air of Heaven seemed to visit his cheek too roughly; the noise and turmoil of the busy world oppressed and distracted him. Poor, pitiable wreck of humanity! Who would wish to be like him? In consequence of suffering, to become so inured to it as actually to prefer it to ease, and to restraint, as to prefer it to liberty! I do not thus love my chains. God made us for freedom

Digitized by Google

— God made us for happiness; and sadly to be pitied is he who does not prize his liberty and happiness. He has lost the image of his God. He is scarcely a man. He is but little better than the brutes that perish.

For my part, I thank God that *I am free*. I breathe the air of religious liberty, and it revives my soul. I raise my unshackled hands in gratitude to Heaven, and sing aloud for joy. But still I remember the struggle — the conflict between light and darkness — the despairing avowal of a belief which was revolting to my very soul; it was wormwood and gall; my soul hath it in remembrance.

My eyes are now opened to behold the truth, and beauty, and symmetry, of another faith than yours, and not all your declarations and bold assertions can turn what I behold, into what *you assert it to be*. Show me another scheme of faith, and let me compare it with the Bible, but do not attempt to frighten me by hard names and dark pictures of your own creation. It is easy to dress up a hideous figure, and call it Unitarianism, but those who are choosing for eternity will not be very readily deceived by any such imaginary creation.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XVII.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

My dear Sir:

I perfectly agree with you when you remark that "the world is uneasy," that "the spirit of God moves upon the troubled waters of life." It is even so. The world is indeed uneasy, and I am glad of it. We *ought* to be uneasy, there is cause enough for it. Light has been breaking in upon us, every science has been advancing, the civilized world has made rapid strides in every kind of knowledge, the all-important science of biblical criticism has received special attention, and new light has been thrown upon various passages of the sacred word, and yet our minds are to be fettered and tied down to the creeds and formularies given to our ancestors long, long ago. An alarm is sounded the moment men begin to interpret the Bible for themselves. Let them be ever so conscientious, let them be ever so anxious to avoid error, let them love the Bible ever so well, they are denounced the moment they presume to read the Bible with their own eyes. In what respect does this differ from that religion which entirely withholds the Bible from the people? I do not want the

Digitized by Google

Bible, unless I can read and understand it for myself. Why should I take the trouble to "search the Scriptures," when others are to decide for me just what they mean, and just as they please? But it is too late in the day for this. People will think for themselves, let it be ever so dangerous to themselves, let it be ever so disagreeable or alarming to others. And whenever a disposition is shown to curb this spirit of free inquiry, *it is time to be uneasy.*

I am rejoiced that the human mind is awaking from the sleep of ages. Very gradually has it been arousing itself from its lethargy; like the sluggard it has said, "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep;" but now, to some extent, it seems thoroughly awake. Let us all strive to give this awakened intellect *a right direction.* Let those who value the Bible as the greatest of their blessings, teach others to value it also. Let us all go to that fountain of truth, and earnestly endeavor to fill ourselves with its spirit and with its truth. Let us cling to that blessed book as to our only hope. But Oh, let us *not* endeavor to lull the human mind to sleep again by that old monotonous cry which you are sounding even now in my ears — the cry of mystery — mystery. You remark that, "the minds of few persons are unexercised; those whom God has chosen are strengthened and built up in the great mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Now, I say, let each mind judge for itself what *is* that mystery of godliness, of

Digitized by Google

which the Bible speaks. Let each one gather from the Bible how it was that God was manifested in the flesh. That this was *the fact*, we all alike believe.

You are perhaps aware, that the text just quoted should not read "God manifest in the flesh," but that Griesbach, whose authority is universally acknowledged by *Trinitarians* as well as others, has decided that the word God, in this passage, is not to be found in the best ancient manuscripts. In his edition of the New Testament, he expresses it, "great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifest in the flesh, &c." In regard to this text, Sir Isaac Newton says, "what the Latins have done to the foregoing,* the Greeks have done to that of St. Paul. 1 Tim. iii. 16. For by changing into Θc, the abbreviation of Θεὸς, they now read, 'Great is the mystery of godliness; GOD manifested in the flesh.' Whereas all the churches for the first four or five hundred years, and the authors of all the ancient versions, Jerome, as well as the rest, read, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh.' * * * With the ancienter versions agree the writers of the first five centuries, both Greeks and Latins. For they, in all their discourses to prove the deity of the Son, never allege this text, that I can find, as they would all have done, and some of them frequently, had they read 'God manifested in the flesh,' and therefore they read ὅ. * * * In all the times of the hot and lasting Arian controversy, it never came into play; though now those disputes are over, they

*Alluding to that well known interpolation, 1st John, v. 7.

Digitized by Google

that read 'God manifested in the flesh,' think it one of the most obvious and pertinent texts for the business." (*Sir Isaac Newton's History of Two Corruptions of Scripture.*)

But why, my dear Sir, are you such a friend to mystery? Why do you not endeavor to enforce it upon the minds of all that the religion of the gospel is so plain and simple, that the "wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein?" It is because men have not been contented with what is plain and simple in religion, but have constructed an elaborate system of perplexities which they wish to force upon all mankind, upon the peril of losing their title to the name of Christian. Religion, as it is taught by Orthodox creeds, is anything but plain and simple. It cannot be understood; and the only remedy I ever heard prescribed for those whose perplexities have made them sick at heart, is to receive it all as a sacred *mystery*, not to be rashly inquired into, or rather, not to be inquired into at all.* Orthodox Christianity is full of perplexities and metaphysical distinctions, utterly incomprehensible to plain unlettered men; this, it appears to me, is not the religion of the Bible.

I have scarcely received a letter in which this text concerning the mystery of godliness, incorrectly translated as it is, has not been strenuously urged upon me; and after quoting it yourself, you thus proceed: "But there are those who will not believe that God has any mystery which cannot be fathomed by their finite reason,

* See Dehon's Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 99, 100. See also Appendix P.

Digitized by Google

and who plunge without compass or rudder into that ocean which is boundless, and where, losing all landmarks, they are driven either to the abject submission of the Romanists, or else abandon themselves to the delusive fancies of the German Neologists, and the thousand forms of skepticism which are as various as the human countenance; in fact, to that natural religion, which is indeed no religion at all, but the mere fancies of unguided imagination, or the borrowed light of gospel morality."

This is severe enough. But because I cannot believe some things which you call mysteries, and which you say are revealed in the Bible, but which I call contradictions, and which I think are not revealed in the Bible, why should you take it for granted that I am not willing to receive anything which my finite understanding cannot perfectly fathom ? I protest also against the common method of confounding *contradictory propositions* with *mysteries*, which only mean secret things—things which we, from some cause or other, do not or cannot know. I am very willing to admit, that there are mysteries—secret things—which I cannot comprehend, and which yet, as matters of fact, *I fully believe*. It has been revealed to me that my soul is to exist hereafter ; in this fact I fully believe. Even the fact was once a mystery, but the secret is revealed ; as a matter of fact, it is a mystery no longer. What became of the soul after death, we well know was a most perplexing mystery till life and immortality were brought to light in the gospel. But the *exact mode* of its existence—where it will be, how it will be engaged—is still a mystery.

Digitized by Google

Because it has not been revealed, it must therefore remain a mystery till experience or some further revelation teaches each individual soul how and where it will exist hereafter.

Now, so far as God has revealed anything to us concerning his Son, so far the mystery is removed. What he has not revealed, we should not attempt to explain. It is revealed to us that Jesus Christ was sent into the world to save sinners; that he was sent by the Father; and that he was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. But it is not revealed that *he who sent* and he who *was* sent are the same Being; that there are three distinct persons in one God; that one of these persons possessed *two distinct natures;* none of these things are told us in the Bible, and they are directly opposed to all our ideas of individual identity. They are something more than mysteries; *to us*, they are contradictions; and they ought to be distinctly laid down in the Bible before we can be expected to believe them. But such a thing, I believe, cannot be; for a revelation from God cannot contain contradictions.

It is very much the practice of Trinitarians, when pressed with the consequences of their doctrines, constantly to place things which are *above* human comprehension, and things *contrary* to human reason and experience exactly on the same level. It is the never failing resort; but it must be a weak and credulous mind, indeed, which cannot perceive the difference. I do not think this is right, I do not think it fair. In this way you strive to narrow down my mind, to restrain it

Digitized by Google

within the limits of your creed, when it seeks enlargement, and longs to feed itself upon the word of God, to attain to one degree of light after another.

On the subject of mysteries, the excellent Robert Robinson, who wrote towards the close of the last century, thus remarks: "Christianity, say some, is often called a mystery, or a secret; even the text calls it so. (Eph. iii. 4.) True, but the same text says, Paul *knew* this secret, and the Ephesians might *understand* what he knew of it, if they would *read* what he wrote to them. When ye *read*, he says, ye may *understand my knowledge* in the *mystery* of Christ."

So Paul, in speaking of the mystery of godliness, in the text on which we have been commenting, was conferring with Timothy in regard to the great secret, the good news, the mystery of the faith, which they both knew, and which Timothy was to reveal to those to whom he was sent to preach. But this great secret was simple, was plain, when it was revealed—so plain, that he who runs may read; the gospel was for the poor, the ignorant, as well as the learned.

But, says Robinson, "we perceive a wonderful inclination in Christians towards something in religion, so sublime as not to be understood; whereas the true sublimity of religion lies in its plainness, as the true excellence and dignity of man consist in his becoming such a plain man as Jesus Christ was. This inclination is a remnant of the old education given by monks and priests, whose majesty stood in the credulousness of their followers. They made creeds, or articles to be believed, and gave them to our forefathers to say over. You

Digitized by Google

do not understand them, said they, but we do; and, while they were doing that, the creed-makers ran away with their houses and lands. Let us renounce this disposition, and let us believe nothing but what we understand."

"Alas!" he exclaims, "we are not employed now-a-days in examining and choosing religious principles for ourselves, but in subscribing and defending those of our ancestors."

Digitized by Google

LETTER XVIII.

AN EXTRACT.

My dear Sir:

I believe that you speak the real feelings of your heart when you say, that you "sincerely and prayerfully mourn" that I should be "a victim" to what you deem a "strong delusion" and "a lie." And you say, "I mourn the more that your constitutional romance of disposition seems to make your case the more hopeless. You pursue with martyr spirit the abstract idea of Truth, or else you would be in no hurry to proclaim your adherence to Anti-Christ, when you know you must harrow the feelings of all your friends, and are taking a step which may bring your honored and aged father in sorrow to his tomb, or to exclaim with the Psalmist, 'O that I had died for thee.'"

I am deeply pained and grieved, my dear Sir, that any of my friends should be offended with me for venturing to follow the dictates of my conscience; but my grief and pain are entirely unmixed with any feelings of self-reproach. If, when we appear together at the bar of God, they could assume my responsibility; if I were *very sure* of this, I might feel willing to subscribe to just

Digitized by Google

what my friends *assert* to be the truth of the Bible. But I am afraid to do this. Who, of all my numerous friends, will take the responsibilty ? Who will *ensure* my safety, if I give up my own opinion, and subscribe to theirs ? Will *you* do it ? Alas ! I fear I shall find no such convenient friend. God knows that I am *able* to form *some* opinion for myself ; he likewise knows that I think it wrong not to do this to the extent of the abilities he has given me ; and he certainly will, and he certainly *ought* to punish me if I do it not.

In regard to truth, you go on to say : " Truth in its abstract has always been an idol with visionaries. The unclouded mind views it as a good only by its consequences. When you speak of the Truth of God as necessary to eternal happiness, I can understand it ; when truth is divulged which will add to our temporal ease I can appreciate its value ; but if I hear a man proclaim and devote himself to a truth in physics which he acknowledges can be of no practical value, or an atheist worshipping as an idol his ideal creed, while admitting that at the worst the Christian will suffer no more than he, I place them both in the same category of visionary and senseless dreamers. Now, let me ask you, if you believe any soul ever went to hell, or ever will, for believing Christ to be God ? Supposing it then a delusion, what good will you effect by a hasty avowal of sentiments which *can add* no security to a soul, and *may* shake the safety of some, and will turn the joy of many into mourning, their smiles into tears ? How many ' passing under the rod,' and soothed and comforted by your muse, will feel they have tasted but the

Digitized by Google

bitter ashes of the fabled fruit; have been lured from their grief by a falsity, and comforted by a fraud! To return to that word Truth. If Paul had died to prove his faith in Christ with the noble hope of saving souls, that would indeed be an object worthy of the sacrifice. But suppose he had died to prove what is equally true, that Prussic acid is poison, and for no other end than the establishment of the fact; he would have been justly called a madman. Do you take my illustration and distinction? Such is your case in avowing your new creed."

I am no metaphysician, and very little of a logician, and therefore, for the life of me, I cannot appreciate the soundness of your argument, or the justness of the parallel you have drawn between Paul's supposed case, and my real one. If St. Paul had been required *to subscribe to a creed* asserting that Prussic acid was *no* poison; if he felt that he was tacitly acknowledging before the world what he believed to be untrue every time he joined in a prayer or sang a hymn, every time he took his seat with his brethren as a member of their fraternity, every time, especially, he sang a *doxology*; if, moreover, he was of the opinion that the general belief in regard to Prussic acid was producing general *evil*; then I think our cases would have been parallel cases, and it clearly seems to me it would have been his duty to do *as I have done.*

If he had joined a society whose fundamental article of faith was that Prussic acid was no poison; if he had been generally and prominently known as a member of that society, and if he discovered that Prussic acid *was*

Digitized by Google

a poison, and thought, moreover, that the society were doing *harm*, then he would have been bound to leave them, and to say why he did it; *especially* if they would not allow him to withdraw *quietly*, which the members of such societies, and communities in general, *are not very apt to do*. If, on the other hand, there had been no such society in the world, and the general belief that Prussic acid was no poison had been perfectly harmless, Paul would indeed have been a fool and a madman to volunteer to die for such a fact; but I do not see how there could have been the least occasion for his death. It is only when *tests* are required of men that they are in any danger of losing their lives for opinion's sake.

Your argument is founded upon what I deem exceedingly erroneous premises, and therefore it is no argument to me. In the first place, you take it for granted that a belief in the doctrine of Christ's supreme divinity, and consequently in that of the Trinity, is, if a delusion, a perfectly harmless one; to this I do not agree. I think, as I have before said, that the *habit* of assenting to contradictory propositions, such as that *three are one*, and that the finite and the infinite *meet in the same individual*, is a habit most injurious to the mind, and leads either to credulity or infidelity. It opens a spacious door for every absurdity. These doctrines are as contradictory to reason as the doctrine of transubstantiation. They are quite as contrary to *our experience*. So far, then, we do not agree in the premises from which we start.

You make no distinction, in the second place, between one who is *ignorantly* subscribing to an error,

Digitized by Google

an done who does it, *knowing* or *believing* it to be an error. Here is a radical distinction, which ought not to have been lost sight of. If my mind had never been turned to the subject, and I had lived and died worshipping Christ as the Supreme God, I should have been perhaps guiltless ; my error would have been involuntary ; but the moment my attention has been awakened to the point, and, upon thorough investigation, I have decided that it is an error, *my moral attitude is changed.** If, under my new circumstances, I still remained connected with a church which I knew would not receive me if they imagined what was my belief in regard to Christ ; if I still continued to sit with them at the Lord's table when I was certain they would shut me out if they knew my sentiments, should I not be acting the part of a hypocrite ? I leave the decision to every candid mind. If you do not agree to this, I can only say your code of ethics is very different from mine.

If there were no *human creeds* in the world—if churches would only require a belief in the only infallible creed, the one which our Master left us, which is contained in the Holy Bible, and not an assent to *this or that interprètation* of the original one,—then we might keep our opinions to ourselves. But as the church of my fathers, to which I belonged, has a human creed, and I find I cannot conscientiously assent to it, how could I remain there, and feel that I was pursuing an honest, independent course ? Unless, indeed, they would have allowed me to remain there after a candid confession of my

* See Appendix Q.

Digitized by Google

change of sentiments, and this they could not have done consistently with their confession of faith. *No creed but the Bible*, is now my motto, and I hope it will be till I die. And I am becoming more and more attached to the simple, congregational mode of church government. On this point I am rejoiced to know that you and I perfectly agree. I am learning to stand more and more aloof from any *extensive* combination of my fellow men for religious, or for any other purposes. To single churches and single societies I do not object; their organization is simple, and abuses are easily corrected; but the moment their leaders begin to *combine*, I am afraid of them. They wield a power that is dangerous. Too much consolidation is never to be desired, where imperfect man is at the head of affairs. It is not best to pledge ourselves to bodies, which, almost without our knowledge, may carry us whither we would not wish to go. I am well aware that "union is strength;" but I am by no means certain that the strength resulting from union will always be well directed. If I were sure of this, I would rejoice at the spirit of combination, which is a striking feature of our times. But, as things are, such combinations are to be approached with caution, and always narrowly watched. They are too often under the entire control of a few leading spirits, whose love of power grows in proportion to its acquirement, and increases with their success.* I have seen melancholy proofs that very

* That this was emphatically the case in the general councils of the church in former ages, and that it is also true of the general assemblies, conventions, indeed of all religious combinations of

Digitized by Google

large bodies sometimes go wrong with an impetus that is perfectly irresistible and overwhelming, crushing the feeble arms which are raised to impede their progress, and carrying with them even those who oppose them, in one general, headlong, hurrying mass. Nor can they always stop where they themselves intended.

But to return from this digression. I was speaking of human creeds. A man who subscribes to a creed enters into a solemn covenant. I have been accused of breaking my covenant engagements. I *have* broken my covenant, it is true. I entered into a solemn engagement to support and defend the doctrines held by the church with which I became united. But, when a person can no longer believe what he once believed, what is he to do? Is belief a *voluntary* thing? Can a person believe just what he chooses? How can I help believing that which I am convinced is true? The moment a man is convinced of the truth of any opinion, or set of opinions, they are *his* opinions. Persecution, torture, may compel him to *retract* them, but they are his opinions still, if he still remains convinced of their truth. Fire and the sword may make him a hypocrite, but they cannot change his opinions.

When I have before me evidence which convinces me that what I once thought true is not true, *can* I still

modern times, no one who is much acquainted with their history will probably deny. Thus the creeds which we are now required to subscribe,—such as the five Calvinistic points, which were drawn up at the famous Synod of Dort, were composed under the influence of party spirit, and adopted by the Church in consequence of the votes of an excited majority.

Digitized by Google

believe it? And if I cannot still believe it, ought I still to profess it? Alas for the man who binds himself to support a human creed; a creed prepared by *uninspired* men! He may be placing himself in a melancholy position. I cannot more vividly portray his situation than by quoting the words of the Rev. Jared Sparks. He says: "Those persons who have bound themselves to a written system of faith, in the shape of a creed or confession, which they are resolved never to forsake, or which they engage by a solemn covenant always to support, as in the case of many clergymen, church-members, and professors in theological institutions; such persons cannot possibly expect or hope to gain anything by examining their opinions, and comparing them with those of others, and with the standard of the Scriptures. To change a single sentiment would be a violation of their covenant, and a crime. What conscientious man will allow the suspicion to enter his mind that anything can be wrong in a faith, which, in the most solemn manner, he has pledged his veracity to cherish and support? He may defend his adopted creed, and rally round the system to which he is chained, but he cannot go a step further. He cannot open his mind to a new truth, nor suffer himself to concede, that an opponent's argument can have any weight, or his opinions any claim to respect. This would be to distrust the grounds of his own faith, and to betray the guilt of doubting, where he has made a sacred engagement *never to doubt*. What advantage can a person, thus bound and cramped, derive from an examination of religious subjects? The public may be benefitted by

Digitized by Google

knowing his sentiments, and his mode of explaining and defending them ; but, as for himself, his journey will be a circle, he will end where he began."

Is it a question what one who has thus bound himself, perhaps inadvertently, and who afterwards changes his opinions, is to do ? Can it be a question whether he ought to break his vow, or act the hypocrite ? Is not a vow, which we find to be a bad one, better broken than kept ? Each man must decide this question for himself.

This fact is certain, that such vows are too often taken without sufficient thought. Such vows are fearful things. Would to God I had never taken them ; and I would sound a note of warning in the ears of all those who are still free. I beseech them to take care how they promise to maintain and defend any creed that is not expressed *in the very words of the Bible*, the only infallible standard.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XIX.

TRUTH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

My dear Sir:

I confess I have not sufficient mental acumen to understand your meaning when you attempt to separate Truth from its consequences. How can the consequences of Truth, in a moral point of view, be beneficial to us, unless we possess the Truth itself? How can there be effects without a cause? It is very evident that *somebody* must possess the knowledge of a truth before it can *affect* anybody. You will grant that, perhaps. But I may discover, by some chance or other, that *somebody* is mistaken; and then I can no longer say that I believe that person's opinions to be true. I know that I may be exposing to you my want of metaphysical acuteness, but I cannot help it. I have been in the habit of thinking that Truth itself — Truth in the abstract — was essentially important; but this may be one of those old fashioned notions which are now nearly obsolete. You have not yet convinced me, however, that I *was* mistaken in this old fashioned adherence to truth.

Digitized by Google

You have alluded to my volume of poems, written especially for the afflicted, or I would not allude to them myself. You say that those whom they have comforted will find that "they have been lured from their grief by a falsity, and comforted by a fraud!" How can that be? The blessed truths which gave them comfort are there still. The volume consists of a detail of the *real* experience of one on whom the hand of God was heavily laid; and I do not see how any change of opinion can affect the fact that such was my experience then. My change does not affect the truth of God. He has promised to be with the afflicted; I *was* afflicted, oh how severely! and He was with me in a most remarkable manner. His promise is still held out to the afflicted, and the record of my experience is still there. It was no falsity; it was no fraud; and no change of mine can make it so.

This is a delicate subject; I will pass it by after a moment's consideration. It does seem strange to me that people should not be able to see that Unitarians have, and profess to have, an Almighty Saviour. God *is their Saviour, through Christ.* Whatever God does for us, he does for us through Christ. He is the chosen medium of communication. Trinitarians practically exalt Christ *above* the Father. Unitarians go to the Father, as the Supreme Being, through Christ. Another friend, speaking of the volume called "The Parted Family," writes: "I do not see how you can say that the alteration of a few expressions would make the volume agree with your present views. It was the Saviour, God, who was near you in your affliction; at

Digitized by Google

least you thought so." Yes, I thought so then, and I think so now. God, who is emphatically my Saviour, was near me by the blessed influences of his Holy Spirit — that Comforter, whom Christ promised his disciples *that the Father would send* in his name. Christ prayed to the Father for this Comforter for his beloved disciples, and his prayer was granted. We cannot know exactly *the manner* in which God comforts us; but if he does it, that, to us, is all-sufficient. God says to his people, "besides me there is no Saviour." The same friend writes, "I read your book of poems through one night with many tears; read it yourself, and believe!"

Another writes, "Once let it be known that the author of 'The Parted Family' has become *a Unitarian*, and all is lost." Another says, "how little did I think, when reading your touching account of the wonderful manner in which you were sustained and comforted in your hour of need, and with what sweet reliance you leaned upon the promises of the Saviour, and found peace; that you would ever wish to take from him any of his glory, or deny him his divinity." Do my friends think that the delightful promises which Jesus made to his disciples are now expunged from my Bible? And if I believe that he came from the Father with divine power and authority, are not those promises the same to me as the promises of the Father himself? Assuredly they are. Christ said expressly to his disciples, "the words that I speak unto you *I speak not of myself;*" — "all things that *I have heard of the Father* I have made known unto you;" — "the word which ye

Digitized by Google

hear *is not mine*, but the Father's which sent me;" — "I have not spoken *of myself*, but the Father which sent me; he gave me a commandment *what I should say*, and *what I should speak;*"—"as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things;" — "I have many things to say — I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." Can any declarations be more explicit? Christ over and over again denies speaking anything *of himself*. The promises of Christ, then, *came from the Father*. But have I become an Atheist, that the promises of GOD should be of no account to me? How can any one say, until he knows me to be an infidel, that those very promises which supported me then, do not support me now?

My pen trembles while I quote what you next write, but I must do it, to convince you that your appeal has not been overlooked. You say: "Remember those whom you have seen die, *knowing their Saviour to be their eternal God;* think well, for you are about taking a fearful step. Let memory turn her steps to the dying bed of your beloved and noble husband, and pause ere you tread a road that may not reach his resting-place. Think of your child, now in his Saviour's arms, and be sure, ere it be too late, that that Saviour will have room for the mother who would make him but an equal. Think of that holy man who has just gone to his God* — think of his life of faith — his path of purity — his holy walk — his peaceful death, and pause before you set all these down to mere delusion."

* My venerable grandfather, Mr. Job Palmer, who died recently in Charleston, S. C., at the advanced age of ninety-seven years.

Digitized by Google

You take for granted, my dear Sir, many things which I utterly deny and repudiate. God forbid that I should set down "to mere delusion" what I have seen of the life and death of that venerable patriarch, who has left behind him so bright and holy an example — the best and noblest legacy he could have bestowed on his descendants. He was a conscientious, holy man; his faith in Christ led him closely to *imitate* Christ. However mistaken I may suppose him to have been in regard to the metaphysical question of Christ's original nature, I know that he considered him as coming with divine authority, and that he yielded the most cheerful and implicit obedience to the requirements of his gospel. His faith in Christ then was no "delusion;" it was real; it was an active, living principle, which, I devoutly pray, that all his descendants may possess. If, as he did, we receive Christ as the Messiah, as a teacher sent from God — and if we live *the life that he lived*, we shall with him sit down at the right hand of God, where our "Forerunner" has gone before us. I cannot trust myself to dwell upon the other cases to which you have so touchingly alluded; but I hope you will believe me when I say, that I *have* thought seriously and painfully upon my change of opinions *in connection with their memory*, and feeling and knowing as I do, how conscientious I have been — how anxious for the right — how fearful of the wrong — I firmly and joyfully believe that I shall not be separated from them when I come to die.*

*See Appendix R.

Digitized by Google

Your letter thus proceeds: "I may write in vain; argument is the very vanity of man's carnal, petty pride; I know it will not avail. God's Spirit alone can teach the wondrous truth which is no mere abstraction, but in which are the issues of life and death." I am very well aware that this is generally the ground that is taken by my friends. Very few of them appear to think it is a matter which *can* be argued, if I am to judge from the means which they have used to influence me to give up the views I now entertain. But how can I give them up till I am *convinced* they are untrue? If you will convince me, I will joyfully renounce them. In taking the steps I have recently taken, I have had everything to lose, and nothing to gain; that is, in the eye of the world. I have embraced an unpopular faith; I have placed myself in the minority; I have grieved my friends; I have almost broken the hearts of my revered parents. If I could believe just what I please, I would *choose* to believe as all my friends do; that would be far more pleasant to me than this wide difference of opinion. And if, without falsehood and deceit, I could *profess* to believe what I do not regard as true, then all this would not have taken place. But while the human mind remains what it is — while conviction and belief go together, and belief and profession must correspond as they ought ever to do — I do not see what is to be done, but to let every one believe and profess what his conscience dictates.

Moreover, as long as you take it for granted that the truth in regard to the Son of God can be discovered only through the special agency of the Holy Spirit

Digitized by Google

operating on each individual mind ; and furthermore, that this truth has certainly been revealed to you, and those who think as you do ; and that all those who differ from you are thereby proved to be without the Holy Spirit ; I do not see how those who are not willing to concede these things exclusively to you and your sect, can be influenced by your assertions as to what is truth and what is not. *I* also believe that these things are taught us by the Holy Spirit, as that Spirit has revealed them to us *in the Scriptures ;* and I believe that God gives his Spirit to each *individual* who asks for it in the right way ; not to discover to such an individual *any new truth*, not revealed in the Bible, but to help him to discern *what is there taught.* Therefore, each individual must, with all the aids he can procure, go to the Bible *on his own responsibility*, and discover, as well as he is able, what is contained therein. This doctrine of the special illumination of certain individuals, at the present day, when *miraculous gifts* are no longer bestowed as our infallible guide, is full of danger. A man may teach the most monstrous errors, and say he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that we ought to give him credit for truth in a matter of which we cannot possibly judge. But I say, let us depend upon no uninspired fallible man like ourselves ; let each one depend upon THE BIBLE, devoutly and honestly seeking assistance from God.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XX.

ELECTION.

My dear Sir:

If I held, as you do, the Calvinistic views of the doctrine of Election, I should consider any strenuous efforts for the spiritual welfare of my friends as a useless waste of time, and a profitless expenditure of strength. I cannot but believe that those who hold the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation, are inconsistent, when they mourn over, labor, and pray for those whose fate is irrevocably fixed. But on this point, as on many others, the Orthodox *theory* and *practice* are essentially different. The doctrine too, of the final perseverance of saints, as it is called, seems to give you, as well as some others among my friends, a good deal of comfort. My mother says, that she is consoled by the thought that I "have heretofore given good evidence of piety;" and therefore she believes that I will be recovered from what she deems my backslidden state. She thus expresses herself; "while I am writing I am comforted by the reflection that you have given evidence that you were born of God. If so, and God grant it, he will bring you safely to his kingdom of glory." And *you*

Digitized by Google

also remark, "if you are one of his children, he will yet pluck you out of the miry clay, and out of the horrible pit; and, if not, all we dare say is to pray earnestly that he may yet make you the real recipient of his gracious gift. I will not, cannot believe he will abandon one of the offspring of his children to the deceitful delusions of human reason, and I cannot think a descendant of that holy man who has just gone to his rest will be left to perish."

I can easily perceive, my dear Sir, how the habit of depending for salvation entirely upon the *merits* of another, without regard to any actions of our own, has tinctured your whole mind. You evidently place much dependence upon the fact of my pious ancestry, which, in my view, so far from being any *safeguard* to me, adds fearfully to my responsibility. Their dedication of me to God in infancy, their prayers, their efforts, can do nothing for me unless I exert myself. All piety is strictly *personal*; and my anxious friends, while they pray for me, must persuade me to live a *holy, Christian life*, or all their prayers will be of no avail. I thank them for their solicitude, and I hope they will ever set me such an example of love to God and love to man, of *charity*, *meekness*, and *forbearance*, that I may be perfectly safe in following their footsteps closely, as they follow Christ.

But what example of *meekness* is there in the extracts from your letter which follow? I can see nothing but a self-righteous spirit, mingled with a great degree of zeal against what *you deem* error. You call yourself, and those who agree with you in *merely* metaphysical

Digitized by Google

and speculative opinions — "God's own people," and all others you specify as belonging to "Anti-Christ." This is what you say: "I am deeply and fearfully impressed with the dreadful truth of that prophecy which denounces a woe upon those who deny their Saviour as God,* and seek in by-paths to avoid the simple way of salvation, so opposed to their carnal natures only because it is the way of God's appointment. (!) Anti-Christ totters to her fall; but, alas! her declining years are too truly gilded with the blood of many erring souls, and her final ruin will bury numbers dear to God's own people; so that the very triumph of their Master will be a heavy cross to their natural affections. But God's ways are not as our ways. Once I read the inspired book with unalloyed pleasure at the evident promise of his coming; little did I then think the foretold precursors would be among kindred and friends. I thought to see Anti-Christ triumphing in the distance, gathering a short-lived strength from abroad, and finally yielding to the mighty hand stretched out against it, with a struggle we might see from afar, but never feel. But his strides are hitherward, and we have the wormwood and the gall as well as the high consolations and hopes they may embitter and tarnish, but cannot overthrow." All this is very glowing, and would be quite alarming to me if I were conscious that I had gone over to the enemies of Christ; but my conscience acquits

* If by Saviour you mean *Christ* — for God is sometimes in the Bible called our Saviour — will you tell me where the prophecy to which you have alluded may be found?

Digitized by Google

me of the charge, so your arrows fall harmless to the ground.

The next quotation I shall make is, if possible, in still stronger language; and you include in your anathemas the whole body of those who hold Arminian sentiments. Speaking of Arminianism, you say, that "he who would add an iota to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, detracts from the fulness of his Godhead; and I have long believed all of that creed (that is, all Arminians) practically Unitarians, except the self-deceived theorists who always become thorough Calvinists on their knees. You can imagine my uneasiness and distress concerning you; for you know that I cannot separate the very and absolute divinity of Jesus from religion. It is without Christ, the infinite God, a form without substance — a body soulless — a puerility — an absurdity. Satisfy me that Jesus is not Jehovah, and I am convinced that the Bible is a fable, and Christ an Impostor;* for his Godhead is the light and life of

* The celebrated Thomas Emlyn says, "I wish they who are adversaries to my persuasion, would learn at least the modesty of one of the earliest writers for Christianity since the Apostles, I mean Justin Martyr." Then after giving his views in regard to Christ, he says: "And as for those Christians, who denied the above said things, and held him to be only a man, born in the ordinary way, he only says of them, *to whom I accord not.* He does not damn them, who differed from him, nor say the Christian religion is subverted, and Christ but an impostor, and a broken reed to trust on, if he be not the very supreme God, (the ranting dialect of some in our age;) no, but still he was sure he was the true *Christ* (that is, the Messiah), whatever else he might be mistaken in. It is desperate wickedness in men to hazard the reputation of the truth and holiness of the blessed Jesus upon a diffi-

Digitized by Google

every page; and considering his audience, and their familiarity with the phrase, and the sense they invariably attached to it, I can never doubt he designed to declare himself Jehovah when he said, 'before Abraham was, I am.' With these views you must know what I think of your present position; and yet I do not design to argue with you; it is useless, for you will soon abandon it yourself, and will have to be followed elsewhere. You are at the first step of most Unitarians; you believe Jesus created, and yet possessed by delegation of 'all the powers of the Godhead bodily;' in short, a Deputy God. Now if one possess all the powers and attributes of God, he is God; for we can only conceive of God by his attributes. But there is only one God, therefore by your creed God created or re-created himself. This is absurd; no one ever held it long or ever will; you must go on, reject the atonement, deprive Jesus of all divine attributes, and make him a mere man with wonderful virtue, and divinely sustained in his mission of example and precept. Here most of that branch of Anti-Christ's followers theoretically arrive; practically they are Deists, and at heart reject revelation; for no human reason can swallow the mass of absurdity their creed contains. Belief in the Gospel involves the consent to many unexplainable mysteries, but no absurdities; any departure to either flank

cult and disputable opinion; to dare to say, that if they are mistaken in their opinion, which I verily believe they are, then Jesus Christ is *a liar* and a *deceiver*, *a mock Saviour*, and the like. What is this but to expose him to the scorn of infidels?"

Digitized by Google

of the grand army does.* I trust God will direct you; these things are in his hands; if you are his child, he will lead or force you back to his fold; if not, his will be done; though it is hard to say it with a submissive spirit, while the heart is still bound up by the earth ties that will not sunder until eternity discloses their comparative unimportance."

I have made a very long extract, my dear Sir, but I could not well divide it. I will now take occasion to remark upon several of its points, though, in substance, I may have done so before. Line upon line is sometimes necessary when we are called upon to defend ourselves; as we find the attack upon the same point is often repeated, though perhaps in a different form, and with a variety of weapons.

But let me first inquire whether it has never occurred to you, that a positive and dogmatical assumption of superior orthodoxy is often indicative of conscious weakness of position, as excessive blustering is generally a sign of cowardice? And as no man will so watchfully and jealously guard the rights of his fellow men as he who rightly guards his own, so no man will be more ready to encroach upon the rights of others, than he who has, perhaps unconsciously, surrendered his own. An old writer has somewhere said, that "no one is so anxious to impose his opinions on others as he who has imposed upon himself;" and general observation and experience will convince every reflecting man of the truth and sagacity of the remark. Therefore, with

* See Appendix S.

Digitized by Google

most minds, a mild, firm, yet humble expression of opinion has much more weight than a positive assertion of right; and if good reasons can be assigned, why, so much the better, of course. Let those who are inclined to dictate and dogmatize, think seriously of this; they will find that they sometimes unconsciously defeat their own ends by the exhibition of a spirit which sometimes betrays the weakness of their cause.*

I am amazed at your sweeping assertion concerning Arminians. I wonder that you are willing to consign them all over to the ranks of the enemy—to place them with infidels and Deists;—for you perceive that in the latter part of the long extract I have made, you call Unitarians *deists* and *infidels*, and in the first part of it you say that you have long regarded Arminians as Unitarians. Taking the two assertions together, therefore, you would make it out that all Arminians are also deists and infidels. Is this Christian charity? Is it the spirit of the gospel? That it is the spirit of *Calvinism* I do not doubt; but that it is the mild, delightful spirit of the Christian religion—the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus—I do not believe. It is the spirit that enacted the scenes which disgraced the synod of Dort, which afterwards kindled and fanned the flames

* "As Plutarch," says Hales, "reports of a painter, who having unskilfully painted a cock, chased away all cocks and hens, that so the imperfection of his art might not appear in comparison with nature; so men willing for ends to admit of no fancy but their own, endeavor to hinder an inquiry into it, &c." Men who are *in earnest* in their search after truth, it will not be very easy to "chase away" by arbitrary assertions and alarming representations.

Digitized by Google

of persecution, which sent Benevelt to the scaffold, which consigned the learned Grotius to a dungeon, which hurried Michael Servetus to the stake.

You say you cannot separate the very and absolute divinity of Jesus from religion. I really suppose, that, with your present views, you cannot; but is that any reason why others may not be able to do it? I could not do it once; but the idea of the *absolute* divinity of my Master forms no part of my religion now. "Without Christ, the infinite God," you say, it is to you "a form without substance, a body soulless, a puerility, an absurdity." But it is not so to me. I can conceive of only *one* infinite God, not *three*. If Jesus be, as you say he is, the "infinite God," then, so is the Father the infinite God; and so is the Holy Spirit; and it follows that there are three infinite Gods. But I cannot conceive of three infinite Beings in the universe. If the Son, the second person in the Trinity, be the "infinite God," you must either blot out from the universe the other persons of the Trinity, the infinite and universal *Father*, and the Holy Spirit,— or you must, of necessity, believe in three infinite Beings, which you yourself will probably acknowledge to be an "absurdity." Nothing can be added to what is infinite; and if the Son of God be "infinite," he, the Son, is the only God. But how different is this doctrine from that which Jesus taught us. "The Son," he tells us, "*can do nothing* of himself," — "the Father which sent me, *he* doeth the works." He bids us pray to the *Father*, not to God,— which term Trinitarians would understand as including the whole Trinity;

Digitized by Google

but the term he uses is *the Father*, plainly showing that he did not mean himself, for he certainly, even if God, is not the Father. And if he was the "infinite God," and equal with the Father, it seems passing strange, that, when his disciples expressly besought him to teach them how to pray, he should have made no mention of himself at all. If the doctrine of the Trinity be true, I do not see how Christ could have directed us to pray to the Father, and why he did not use the more comprehensive term, God. The Father, according to that doctrine, is only the third part of the Godhead, and therefore is not the whole God. If you are shocked at this, and say he *is* the whole and perfect God, then, according to your hypothesis, so is the Son, and so is the Spirit, and you make *three* whole and perfect Gods. If you say they cannot be thus separated, and when you pray to one you pray to the whole, then, I say, you make your Master teach a very great error; for he always speaks of the Son as being *distinct* from the Father. Again, if the Son is only the third part of the Godhead, he is not the infinite God. If, again, you say that he, the Son, *is* God, then again I say that so is the Father, and so is the Spirit, and once more there are three Gods. If you still say that it is only when taken together that they are God, then I say, that, taken separately, they cannot be Gods; the Son, the second person, is not God, because the other persons are left out; the Spirit, the third person, is not God, for the same reason; and you take from us also the first person, *the Father* — the God of the Bible.

But how different is your idea of the divinity of the

Digitized by Google

Son from the ideas held by the Trinitarians of the early ages. They did not regard the Son as the infinite God. Origen certainly taught his inferiority to the Father. But this point you will see more fully discussed in the 3d and 22d letters. In regard to your assertion that without Christ, the infinite God, religion is an "absurdity," I will remark, that, to me, the absurdity appears to be *all* the other way. To believe that Christ, "the infinite God," was sent into the world *by* the infinite God, while he was all the time sounding in our ears the fact that he did not come of himself — that he was sent to do the will of another, which other, according to your hypothesis, was himself — for there can be but one infinite God — seems, to me, much more like an absurdity than anything in the Unitarian faith. Christ is indeed, as you say, the "life and light of every page of the New Testament," but it is not as the infinite God that he there lives and shines. It is as the Messiah — the *Son* of God — who was sent by the compassionate Father, that all who believe might have eternal life.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXI.

THE PHRASE "I AM."

My dear Sir:

I will now consider the import of the phrase "*I am*," as presented in the extract which forms the subject of the foregoing letter. You remark that, "considering Christ's audience, and their familiarity with the phrase, and the sense they invariably attached to it, you can never doubt he designed to declare himself Jehovah, when he said, before 'Abraham was, I am.'" It is contended by many learned men that the Greek phrase here translated, "I am," is invariably used to mean, I am *he*, that is, the Messiah. Twice before, in this chapter, the same Greek phrase is introduced, and in both instances it is rendered by the translators of our common version, "I am *he;*" it occurs in the twenty-fourth and twenty-eighth verses. Why king James's translators saw fit to render this verse differently from the others, it is impossible with certainty to decide, though the reason may be very easily conjectured. It certainly would not have injured the sense of the verse to add, as they had done in the two former verses, the pronoun he, and it would have prevented

Digitized by Google

much controversy. To show that in the 28th verse Christ was speaking of himself as *the Messiah*, and *not* as God, he says, "then shall ye know that I am he, *and that I do nothing of myself.*" The same expression may also be found in John iv. 26; xiii. 19; xviii. 5, 6, 8, and in every instance it is translated, "I am he."

In Exodus iii. 14, the term "I AM," is used as a *proper name*, and applied by Jehovah to himself; "thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The sentence is perfect and complete. Whereas, if, in the verse under consideration, the phrase is to be understood *in the same sense — as a proper name*, the sentence is an incomplete and unmeaning one. Read it thus, understanding "I am" as a proper name, and you will discover this, for the proper noun is entirely without its corresponding verb. But read it with the pronoun *he* understood, and it is a complete sentence; though the use of the present tense in connection with the past strikes the ear of a grammarian singularly and unpleasantly. The biblical critic Wakefield says, "the peculiar use of the present tense in the usage of Scriptural expressions is to imply determination and certainty; as if he had said, 'my mission was settled and certain before the birth of Abraham.'"

It is clear from Scripture, and from the early fathers that the Jews *did not understand* Jesus to have announced himself as the infinite God by *this* or any other expression. Sparks, in his "Inquiry," plainly proves that the early Trinitarians did not think that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught, either by Christ or his Apos-

Digitized by Google

tles, so as to be understood at the time. This is a point of much importance; and as most of my friends may not be able very easily to obtain the work to which I have alluded, I shall not scruple to avail myself and them of the erudite labors of Professor Sparks, by quoting largely from his book. The extracts I shall make are taken from a work entitled "An Inquiry into the comparative moral tendency of Trinitarian and Unitarian doctrines, in a series of letters to the Rev. Dr. Miller, of Princeton." Those who can obtain access to the work will be amply rewarded for their labor if they will give it an attentive perusal. It cannot fail to enlarge their ideas, liberalize their minds, and add greatly, perhaps, to their store of general knowledge.

"The opinion," he says, "that the Trinity is plainly taught in the Scriptures, has not generally prevailed till of late. So far were Trinitarians from holding such an opinion in former times, that in nothing did they exercise their ingenuity more than in devising reasons why this doctrine should be only obscurely shadowed forth by the Saviour and the Apostles, and why it should be kept concealed from the Jews.

"This subject merits discussion," he says, "not because it affects the Scriptural evidence in regard to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine; but because it is intimately connected with the presumption *of making the Trinity a necessary article of faith*, which all persons must believe before they can be called Christians, or hope for salvation. If the primitive Christians knew nothing of this doctrine, it is absurd to clothe it with so

Digitized by Google

much importance; nay, it is absolutely putting a false character upon the religion of Jesus, and deceiving the humble inquirer into a fatal reliance on things which can have no good tendency on his religious or moral conduct. In this light the subject is worth pursuing."

Professor Sparks then goes back to the time of the Saviour and of his Apostles; refers to the first believers in Christianity; to the early and later Fathers; to the Catholics after the Reformation; to some of the first reformers; to the Arminians of Holland; and to eminent English divines; and clearly shows "with how little discretion the Trinity is *now* affirmed to be plainly taught in the Scriptures; and with how little regard to consistency it is imposed as a necessary article of faith."

That it is not *explicitly* taught in the Scriptures appears to me so plain, that all attempts to prove the fact seem superfluous; yet when men insist upon it as a *fundamental* article of faith, and affirm a denial of it to be "a soul ruining error," the proof becomes important and even necessary. Professor Sparks proves that it is not thus taught. I have been glancing my eye over the pages of his work, and find every word that he says so important — so much to the point in my argument with you — and so much better said than anything I could say, that I shall probably lay the whole of it before you, trusting that I shall be excused by the author for giving myself such latitude.

"In the first place, then," he says, "it will not be denied that the great design of the revelations, contained in the Old Testament, was to acquaint the Jews

Digitized by Google

with *the true nature of God*; nor will it be denied, that from all these revelations, they had no conceptions of any other mode of existence, than that of *his simple unity*. It was perpetually enforced upon them, as a fundamental truth, that 'the Lord their God was *one*.' No history, either sacred or profane, acquaints us with a single fact, from which it can be inferred, that the Jews had any knowledge of a three-fold nature in the Deity. On the contrary, all history is against such an inference; and the demonstrable certainty, that these people, for whose light and improvement the Old Testament was expressly designed, never had the remotest suspicion of such a doctrine being contained in their sacred books, is the clearest possible evidence, that it is not plainly taught there, whatever may now be deduced from types, and shadows, and dark sayings, and Hebrew idioms, and double meanings.

"And, again, where does it appear that the people to whom our Saviour preached, understood him to discribe God as existing in a three-fold nature? Or, to put the question in a more direct shape, where does it appear, that in one instance, he spoke of him as any other, than the one true God? The only history we have of the opinions of that period is contained in the gospels; and there we are made to know, as distinctly as we can be made to know, that Christ ascribes all things to one Being, whom he calls the Father and the Creator * * *."

"The sentiments of the people, as far as we can learn, were in exact accordance with these traits of his conduct and instructions. Were their actions, or their

Digitized by Google

conversation, or their behavior towards him such, as would be expected, if they believed the Supreme Jehovah to be with them in bodily presence ? * This question applies equally in regard to his disciples and his enemies. When he healed a sick man by a miracle, 'the multitude marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto *men*.' They did not marvel, *that God had come down on the earth*, but that he had clothed with such power a man in all appearances like themselves. Mary said to him, after the death of Lazarus, 'If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' When she spoke these words, could she have believed him to be the infinite God, who is every where equally present with his love and his power ? Many examples of this sort might be added, were it necessary ; but no one, it is presumed, will undertake to prove it to have been a prevailing opinion among the contemporaries of our Saviour, that he was God, or that in the nature of God were three distinct persons. † The testimony and probability are against such a result ; and it would be no better than presumptuous, idle conjecture, to represent the Trinity as plainly taught, if taught at all, in our Saviour's immediate instructions."

"When we come to the preaching of the Apostles, we hear nothing of their promulgating a Trinity. We have a minute account of their preaching written by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles ; and we here look in vain for any place in which they teach the deity of Christ, or the existence of a Trinity. Nor can it be

* See Appendix T. † See Appendix U.

Digitized by Google

inferred from anything said or done by their hearers, that they understood them to publish such doctrines. * * * In short, *it cannot be proved* that the persons instructed by the Prophets, the Saviour, and the Apostles, *had any notions of a Trinity;* while on the contrary, almost every page of the Bible is loud in proclaiming the divine unity, and in establishing the fact, that this was the faith of all true believers. Inference, in this case, cannot be admitted as argument. If the Trinity be anything, it is as essential to the divine nature as the Unity, and if one was as plainly taught as the other, we should have the same evidence of their having been equally believed.* We have no such evidence, but abundance to the contrary, and this is enough to justify us in affirming, that the Trinity was not preached by the Saviour and his Apostles in such a manner as to be understood at the time."

* It might be added that as one is so much more incomprehensible than the other, so much the more necessary that it should be plainly taught.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXII.

EXTRACTS FROM EARLY WRITERS.

My dear Sir:

I will now adduce the evidence which is brought by Professor Sparks from early ecclesiastical writers. He says: "Let us see, in the next place, how this result (at the conclusion of the last letter) agrees with some of the early fathers. We shall here find almost a universal opinion that the deity of Christ was *not* plainly taught in the Scriptures; and as for a Trinity of persons, nothing is heard of it, till the deity of the Holy Spirit was decreed by the council of Constantinople, near the close of the fourth century. A few passages shall be here introduced, merely to substantiate the *fact*, that in their opinion the Trinity was not explicitly taught, either in the Old Testament or the New."

"Athanasius allows, that Christ did not make known his deity to the Jews, and endeavors to account for it, by intimating, that the world could not yet bear such a doctrine. And he adds, 'I venture to affirm, that even the blessed disciples themselves had not a clear knowledge of his deity till the Holy Spirit came on them at

Digitized by Google

the day of Pentecost.' * This passage has a comprehensive import, and proves most clearly, that, in the opinion of Athanasius, the deity of Christ was not known even to the Apostles till after his death. Theodoret speaks to the same purpose. 'Before his death and sufferings, the Lord Christ, did not appear as God, either to the Jews generally or to his Apostles.' † Chrysostom often intimates, that Christ made but an imperfect indication of his deity to his disciples. On one occasion he observes, 'Christ did not immediately reveal his deity; at first he was thought to be a prophet, Christ, simply a man, but at last from his works and sayings, it appeared what he was.' ‡ Chrysostom further says, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, did not herself know the secret of his being the Supreme God." §

"The Fathers, also, acknowledged, that after the death of Christ the Apostles did not teach this doctrine openly; as we learn from the hypothesis framed by them to account for the fact. They profess to consider it a mark of prudence and caution in the Apostles to avoid promulgating so unpopular a tenet. It would shock the prejudices of the Jews, on the one hand, who thought the unity of God a vital doctrine; and on the other hand, it would encourage the heathens in their polytheism and idolatry; and thus serious obstacles would be thrown in the way of their converting either

* Serm. Major de Fid. Montf. Coll. Vol. II, p. 39.
† Opera, Vol. III, p. 15. Ed. Hal.
‡ Opera, Vol. VIII. p. 20.
§ Ibid. Vol. III. p. 289.

Digitized by Google

the Jews or Gentiles to Christianity. It was deemed wise, therefore, to conceal for a time a doctrine of such dangerous tendency.

"Let the Fathers speak on this point. Chrysostom acquaints us, that our Saviour confined himself to instructions concerning his human powers, by reason of the 'weakness of his hearers, and the inability of those who saw and heard him for the first time, to receive more sublime discourses.'* He makes the same remark in commenting on the introductory words of the Epistle to the Hebrews.† Œcumenius says, in remarking on the text, *There is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ*, that 'The Apostle speaks cautiously of the Father and the Son, calling the Father one God, lest they should think there were two Gods, and the Son one Lord, lest they should think there were two Lords.'‡ In commenting on another text, we have the following remark of Theophylact: 'Because polytheism then prevailed, the Apostle did not speak plainly of the deity of Christ, lest he should be thought to introduce many Gods.'§ Again, 'As others had *made no mention* of the existence of the Logos before the ages, John taught this doctrine, lest the Logos of God should be thought to be a mere man.'"‖

* Opera, Vol. I. p. 409.

† Ibid. Vol. X. p. 1756, in Heb. Cap. I.

‡ Opera, Vol. I. p. 492, Ed. Lutet. 1631.

§ Comment. in 1 Tim. II. 5.

‖ Comment. in Matt. Praef. p. 1, 2. The original of all the above passages, as well as many others of the same kind, may be seen in Priestley's *History of Early Opinions*, Vol. III. B. 3.

Digitized by Google

"From these sentiments of the Fathers, it may justly be inferred, that, in their opinion, no such doctrine as the Trinity, nor even the deity of Christ, is plainly set forth in the Scriptures. They all agree that our Saviour did not thus teach, and Athanasius represents the Apostles as ignorant of his deity, till the day of Pentecost, which was some time after his death. And when instructed in this sublime truth, they are described as *studiously avoiding to divulge it*, lest offence might be given to weak minds, and to the unconverted. We must remember that these were the opinions of men, who for the most part believed in the divinity of Christ in some sense, and were solicitous to find a reason *why the Scriptures were so silent upon the subject*. The circumstance of their forming an hypothesis makes it evident, that they did not see the Trinity in the writings of the Apostles. Theophylact, it is true, and some others, believed John to have been more bold, and to have spoken more to the point in regard to this doctrine; but this is no other than saying, that it is not taught anywhere else, for John was the last of the sacred writers.

"Dr. Horsley thought to weaken the force of the above conclusion, by supposing that it was the *unbelieving Jews* only, towards whom the caution, or, as he prefers to call it, the 'sagacity' of the Apostles was exercised. To persons of this description the plainer parts of the Christian faith were preached, and when they had become partially initiated, the deeper mysteries of the Trinity were brought to their knowledge. A conjecture so forced hardly deserved the notice which

Digitized by Google

Dr. Priestley condescended to give it.* Where do we hear of the Apostles preaching in private? They preached openly to Jews and Gentiles, converted and unconverted. *Were not their writings intended for the instruction of the whole Christian world?* And is it to be admitted, that the most essential parts of the true faith were left out to accommodate the unbelieving Jews of that day?" †

* Letters to Dr. Horsley, p. 45. London, 1815.

† "In resorting to this device, Dr. Horsley concedes the main point after all, which is, that Athanasius could not find the Trinity in the writings of the Apostles. 'In their public sermons,' says Dr. Horsley, 'addressed to the unbelieving multitude, they were content to maintain that Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, was risen from the dead; *without touching his divinity otherwise than in remote allusions;* but to suppose, that they carried their converts no greater length, is to suppose that their private instruction was not more particular, than their public.' *Letters in reply to Dr. Priestley*, p. 200, American Ed. 1821. The only difference between Priestley and Horsley seems to be, that Priestley thought the Apostles did not teach at all any important doctrines not contained in their writings; and Horsley *conjectured* that these were taught secretly.

"Jamieson labors this point with his usual prolixity. By quoting largely from Athanasius, he succeeds in proving, that he was accustomed to contradict himself, and from this circumstance seems half inclined to doubt the import of the passage, which made Priestley and Horsley believe, that Athanasius did not think the Trinity openly taught by the Apostles. As for the innumerable specimens of corroborative testimony collected by Dr. Priestley from other Fathers, Jamieson says, 'It would serve no good purpose to follow him through this labyrinth.' *Vindication*, Vol. I, p. 293. This was a summary mode of laying out of the account some of the strongest parts of the work, which he was engaged to answer. He actually admits, as Horsley had done, the main point at issue, and proceeds to commend the judgment and prudence of

Digitized by Google

"From the Fathers we may descend to the later writers in the Catholic church, who were ardent defenders of the Trinity, but have not considered it a Scripture doctrine. On this subject Chillingworth says to a Catholic, 'As for Scripture, your men deny very plainly and frequently, that this doctrine can be proved by it.'* But the dogma of the Trinity was in the creeds, and therefore must be defended. Tradition was invoked with success, but without any appeal to the authority of Scripture. Wolzogenius has collected the sentiments of several writers of the Romish Church, a few specimens of which shall be here adduced.

"Petavius, in his celebrated work on the Trinity, speaks as follows: 'Concerning the three persons of the divinity, and their essence, nothing was fully written or known, before the council of Nice, because this mystery *was not revealed and confirmed, till after the conflict between the Arians and Catholics.*' † Sacroboscus tells us, also, that as the Arians appealed to the Scriptures in support of their opinions, they were not condemned by the Scriptures, but by tradition.‡ The

the Apostles in keeping the Trinity a secret. He takes up the clue of the *unbelieving Jews*, which Horsley had dropped, and pursues it with great diligence." *Ibid.* p. 294 – 313.

* Preface to the Author of Charity Maintained, sec. 17. In support of this assertion, Chillingworth refers to Hosius *De Author.* Sec. I. iii. p. 53; to Huntlaeus, *De Verbo Dei*, c. 19; to Gretserus, Zannerus, Vega, Possevin, Wickus, and others.

† De Trinitate, lib. i. cap. 1, sec. 3.

‡ Concilii Nicaeni Patres ex doctrina non scripta, sed per manus Patrum sibi tradita, eos damnarunt. *Defensio Trid. Concil.* cap. 6.

Digitized by Google

Jesuit Scarga writes, that the 'Apostles were at first accustomed to conceal the dogma of the Trinity on account of its difficulty;' and that Paul did not preach the deity of Christ to the Athenians, lest they should think he meant to introduce a multitude of Gods.* According to Bellarmine, 'since the Arians could not be convinced out of the Scriptures, because they interpreted them differently from the Catholics, they were condemned by the unwritten word of God, piously understood.'† In commenting on the text, in which Christ tells his disciples, that he has many things to say to them, which they cannot hear, Salmeron says he refers to the three persons in one God, and the two natures in Christ.‡ Remundus warns the Lutherans and Calvinists, that if they rely on the Scriptures alone, they will be obliged to yield to the modern Arians, not less than were the Fathers to the Arians of old, and he admonishes them to take refuge in tradition, and the consent of the church.§

"From these sentiments of Trinitarian writers, it is obvious, that, whatever may have been their zeal for a Trinity, it was a common opinion in the Catholic Church, that this doctrine was not to be supported from the

* Apostoli dogma trinitatis initio reticere sòliti sunt, propter ipsius difficultatum.

† De Verbo Dei. lib. IV. cap. 3.

‡ Comment. in Joh. xvi. 12.

§ Historia de Ortu et Progressu Haeres. part I. lib. 2, cap. 15. For these testimonies, and others to the same purpose, see Wolzogen's *Praeparat. ad Util. Section. Librorum Nov. Test.* cap 29. See, also, Unitarian Miscellany. Vol. I. p. 329-332; vol. II. p. 81-90.

Digitized by Google

Scriptures. Let all due allowance be made for their love of tradition, it will hardly be urged, that this fondness would make them contented with resting so important a dogma on tradition alone, if they felt secure in having a just claim to the additional and irresistible weight of the revealed word of God. And least of all, as Wolzogenius observes, would they have used this argument to those, who put no confidence in any tradition not sanctioned by the plain language of the Bible. All parties held up the Scriptures as their standard, and if the Catholic doctors had believed them to contain the Trinity, it would seem the part of wisdom and policy, if nothing else, first to entrench themselves with this authority, and then to build up the outworks of tradition.

"Many distinguished Trinitarian writers among the early Lutherans, were of opinion, that their doctrine could not be found in the Old Testament. Wolzogenius mentions particularly the learned Calixtus, professor of theology at Helmstadt, and also Dreger, Leterman, Behm, and some others."

Professor Sparks next brings forward the Arminian writers in proof of the same point; but as you have classed them with Unitarians and Infidels, I suppose you would not give much weight to their authority. Passing over, then, such unworthy witnesses, we come next to the Calvinists and Trinitarians of later times. Among these, says Professor Sparks, there have not been wanting "those, who confessed the silence, or at least the obscurity of the Bible on this subject. The zealous and violently orthodox Jurieu, who ranked a denial

Digitized by Google

of the Trinity among the greatest possible heresies, did not pretend, that this doctrine was known in its proper shape till the council of Nice. He proves from the ancients, that, during the three first centuries, the opinion was universal, that the Son was not equal to the Father, nor his existence of the same duration.*

"Dr. Watts, while he was yet a Trinitarian, confesses, that our Saviour spoke of himself with reserve, when alluding to the mystery of his nature. When the young man called Jesus *good master*, he said in reply, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, and that is God.'† Since he chides the young man for ascribing to him an attribute, which he tells him belongs only to the Supreme Being, no words could be more explicit in testifying that he was not himself that Being. Dr. Watts felt the difficulty, and ventured on the following explanation. 'Our Saviour did not choose to publish his own divinity, or oneness with God, in plain and express terms to the people, but generally by such *methods of inquiry and insinuation*.'‡ That is, according to this example, by *insinuating*, that he was not what he actually was. And the same will follow from many other parts of Scripture, where, if Christ were God, his language was calculated to deceive the people. Watts does not stop with the Trinity, but extends the designed ambiguity of our Saviour's language to other doctrines, and especially to the atone-

* Ben Mord. Apol., Vol. I. p. 46. Jortin's remarks on Ecclesiastical History, Vol. II. p. 29.

† Matt. xix. 17.

‡ Watts's Works, Vol. III. p. 621. Lond. 1810. 4to.

Digitized by Google

ment. When he preached this doctrine, says Watts, it was 'rather in secret to his disciples, or, if in public, it was generally in dark sayings, and parables, and mystical expressions.' * In most cases, such a mode of explanation and defence would be thought no better than giving up the point. Watts, however, in imitation of the Fathers, makes a merit of his difficulties, and charges them all to the prudence and caution of the Saviour. One of the most remarkable things about the matter is, that he could not persuade his conscience to approve the exercise of Christian charity towards those, who could not see as he did this doctrine taught by the Saviour only *in secret*, in *dark sayings*, and *mystical expressions*. There never was a more striking instance of the power of orthodoxy to narrow the mind, and shut up the heart. †

"In Bishop Smalridge's Sermon on the use of Reason, after speaking of the Trinity as described in the Articles, Liturgy, and Creeds, he observes: 'It must be owned that this doctrine is not in so many words taught in the Holy Scriptures. What we profess in our prayers, we nowhere read in Scripture, that the one God, the one Lord, is not only one person, but three persons in one substance. But although these truths are not read in Scripture, yet they may easily, regularly, and undeniably be *inferred* from Scripture. If, indeed, it can be shown, that these inferences are wrong, they may safely be rejected.' ‡ Atterbury advances

* Watts's Works, Vol. III. p. 637.
† Ibid. Vol. III. p. 578.
‡ Smalridge's Sermons, Folio, p. 348.

Digitized by Google

similar sentiments, and seems to think it an advantage to Christianity that this doctrine and others should be expressed so obscurely. It affords a trial of our faith, which we could not have, if all were plain and positive; and, therefore, it is rather a benefit, than otherwise, that the Trinity should be partially and darkly made known in the Scriptures.*

"Such have been the opinions of many of the most learned and respectable Trinitarians in all ages of the Christian Church; they have defended the Trinity, not on the ground of its being clearly taught, but solely as a doctrine of *tradition*, or of *inference*. Some have inclined to one, and some to the other, according to the period and country in which they lived. When tradition was more in vogue than at present, this was made to bear the burden of proof; but when, in the progress of inquiry and knowledge, this refuge of the dark ages was stripped of its authority, a broader foundation was to be sought out for the Trinity. The Bible was now taken up in earnest; where the Trinity was once seen darkly, even by the keen eyes of wisdom and learning, it now came out in such bright and imposing colors as to be distinctly perceived by the shortest vision; it was discovered to be at the bottom of every religious truth; from the first verse of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelations, the whole Bible was full of the Trinity.

"It is worthy of special observation, however, that it has never been formally defended as a plain doctrine of Scripture; nor in Christendom is there a creed in

* Atterbury's Sermons and Discourses on several subjects and occasions, Vol. III. p. 266, 267.

Digitized by Google

which it is expressed in Scripture language ; nor is it ever defined in this language by those who are loudest in proclaiming it a plain Scripture doctrine. It is deduced *by inference*, and inference only. When the matter is brought to the test, it is not pretended that Christ was ever called God, the same Being as the Father, or the Supreme Jehovah. All that is pretended comes to no more than this, that many things are said of Christ, which it is supposed could not be said of him if he were not God. This is called an argument, and then follows the *inference*, that he was God. So in regard to the Holy Spirit, to which certain characteristics are ascribed, that are supposed to be peculiar to the Supreme Being, and hence comes the *inference*, that the Holy Spirit is God. Hitherto we have three Gods, and the labor of *inferring* must be continued, or the unity will be destroyed. It must be *inferred*, that the Son is the same Being as the Father ; and again it must be *inferred*, that the Holy Spirit is the same Being as the Father, and also the same Being as the Son. We are now arrived at what is called a Trinity in Unity, and the point has been gained by building up inference on inference with very little aid from the express words of Scripture."

I have now, my dear Sir, completed my extensive quotations on a certain point ; and you must at least acknowledge that a vast number of Trinitarian writers have not been able to discern, as plainly as you seem to discern, the doctrine of the Trinity, *even* in the phrase used by our Saviour, " Before Abraham was, I am."

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXIII.

ERRONEOUS PREMISES.

MY DEAR SIR:

I WILL next notice what you say in regard to the "absurdity" of believing Jesus a created Being, and yet "possessed by delegation of all the powers of the Godhead bodily." "Now," you go on to remark, "if one possess all the powers and attributes of God, he is God; for we can only conceive of God by his attributes, &c." Before, in such an oracular manner, you pronounce my faith "absurd," you must convince myself and others that your position can be proved, and first, let us inquire whether you start upon fair premises.

I readily grant, that, *from your premises*, you might easily prove an absurdity. But you have first to prove that these premises are correct. So far as I am individually concerned, I do by no means admit them; nor, so far as I know, would they be admitted by any Unitarian upon earth. Unitarians believe, as the Scriptures teach, that their Master possessed "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" not, as you have rendered it, "all the *powers* of the Godhead, &c." And they understand this term, "the fulness of the Godhead,"

Digitized by Google

not in an *unlimited* sense, but with the degree of limitation the subject seems to demand. They interpret one portion of Scripture by another, endeavoring to make every part harmonize with the *general tenor* of the whole book, just as they would, *in fairness and candor*, ascertain the meaning of the different portions of any other book. Therefore, when they read in Col. ii. 9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," they remember that in Eph. iii. 19, Paul prayed that his Christian brethren might be *filled with all the fulness of God*. Here they find the very same expression, "all the fulness;" but, as they do not suppose that, if Paul's prayer were answered, Christians would be equal with God, neither do they believe that because Christ was said to possess "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," he must therefore be God himself. It is true, that if Christians were filled with all the fulness of God, they would be *one* with God, as Christ and his Father were one; for Christ also prayed that Christians might be one, "even as we," said he, "are one;" but in neither case do they make this oneness to signify personal identity; if they did it in one case, they would have a right to do it in the other. But Paul, to make his meaning still more plain, and as if anticipating the mistakes of after ages, seems anxious to explain just what he meant by this expression, "the fulness of the Godhead." He tells us in Col. i. 19, why and how it was that this fulness dwelt in Christ. "*It pleased the Father*," says he, "that in him should all fulness dwell."

So in regard to the phrase "all power;" it is to be

Digitized by Google

used with the same kind of limitation, also keeping in view the declaration of our Saviour that this power was *given* to him.

If, my dear Sir, I approved of the habit, so common among the orthodox, of saying uncourteous things of those whose sentiments I may be opposing, I might easily retort the charge which you have made. It would not be difficult to show that there is something very much like an absurdity in asserting that the Being to whom all power *was given*, possessed that power inherently, or was, in fact, *the very Being by whom* the power was given; and that, when all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ because it pleased the Father that it should be so, he possessed that fulness in his own nature, independently of his Father; or that the Being in whom another Being had placed all fulness, was the very Being who placed that fulness there. But I forbear; I would prefer not to follow the example you have set me in this matter. Two things only I ask of you, and of my friends in general. They are that I may be allowed the privilege of free inquiry, and be permitted to exercise the right of private judgment; — first principles of Protestantism; — principles for which the fathers of the Reformation were always ready to lay down their lives; — for which they toiled and bled; — which all Protestants ought most constantly and jealously to guard.

I used to boast of living in a free country; but, as long as we have sects who vote all who differ from them out of the pale of Christianity, our country is not free. That I have some cause for this remark, you certainly

Digitized by Google

must acknowledge. You have more than once numbered me with the adherents of "Anti-Christ;" you have called my case "a hopeless one;" you have more than insinuated, that, unless I return to my former faith, and your present one, I shall be "left to perish;" you have classed me among those upon whom, as you assert, there is a fearful "woe" denounced; you have placed me among deists and infidels; you have announced my departure to one flank of "the grand army," by which I suppose, you mean the army of "Anti-Christ;" and finally, you have numbered me among those "silly women," who are easily "led away captive." Now I say again, that as long as there are overwhelming sects, and extensive combinations of men, aye, even the majority of the Christian world, who, on account of some differences of opinion, cast entirely out of the pale of Christianity, and deny the name of Christian to those who professedly hold to Christ as their head, — I am right in asserting that my country is not free; for I know of no tyranny more potent, and no despottism more galling, than that of public opinion.

Why do we prize our bodily liberty, but that we may exert our bodily powers? But if we were allowed to take only a certain number of steps, and were obliged to take those steps only in a certain direction, would that be liberty? Would it be worthy of the name? True, the limbs may be unfettered, we are at liberty to use them, but how? Exactly according to the dictation of another. Would that be liberty? Would that be freedom? Yet this is all the mental freedom you are willing to concede to me. Use your reason, you

Digitized by Google

virtually tell me; take the Bible, read it for youself; but if you come to any other conclusion than that which we think to be right, you must of course be wrong. You did not search in the right way; you are without the influences of the Holy Spirit; you can only be right when you think *just as we do.*

Yes, my friend, you appear quite willing that I should read the Scriptures for myself, if I will only read them *with your spectacles.* But if I must understand the Bible exactly as you do, why you might as well take the Bible from me. Just give me *your sense of it*, and I need give myself no further trouble about it.* Why, my dear Sir, this is Popery in all its length and breadth.†

* "Would you see," said the "ever memorable" John Hales, "how ridiculously we abuse ourselves, when we thus neglect our own knowledge, and securely hazard ourselves upon others' skill? Give me leave then to show you a perfect pattern of it, and to report to you what I find in Seneca the philosopher recorded of a gentleman in Rome, who being purely ignorant, yet greatly desirous to seem learned, procured himself many servants, of which some he caused to study the poets, some the orators, some the historians, some the philosophers, and in a strange kind of fancy, all their learning he verily thought to be his own, and persuaded himself that he knew all that his servants understood; yea, he grew to that height of madness in this kind, that being weak in body, and diseased in his feet, he provided himself with wrestlers and runners, and proclaimed games and races, and performed them by his servants; still applauding himself, as if himself had done them.‡ Beloved, you are this man; when you neglect to try the spirits, to study the means of salvation yourselves, but content yourselves to take them upon trust, &c."

† See Appendix, V.

‡ Senecae Epist. ad Lucil. xxvii.

Digitized by Google

But our Master said, "search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." And those private Christians were commended who searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether those things which they were taught were true. How different is this from your real meaning when you direct us to the Bible. Considering that our religious teachers in these days are not inspired men, as the first teachers of Christianity were, the ground you take is very strange. *You* also say, search the Scriptures; but you say at the same time, beware of your conclusions; let me direct your inquiries, and control your final judgment. You give me leave to search the Scriptures, *provided* I find there just what you do; and if I cannot find those things, if I am not so fortunate as to understand *with your understanding*, you insist upon it that I have not searched aright. Is this freedom of inquiry? Is this the right of private judgment for which you, as a Protestant, contend? Is this the liberty you are so kind as to grant me? If it is, I want it not. If I *must* arrive at your conclusions, why should I take the trouble to search for myself? Why not save myself such an expenditure of time, such an amount of anxiety and fatigue, and such a waste of strength? You have searched the Bible; you are very sure you are right; if I should come to different conclusions, it would be certain I was wrong; therefore my wisest plan would be just to give up the whole business into your hands. But before I could be persuaded to adopt your conclusions, you must, as I have elsewhere said, guaranty that I shall not be called to account for my opinions at the

Digitized by Google

last great day.* This I know you cannot do, and therefore I will make the Bible, understood as well as it can be by the reason which God has given me, my *only* standard of faith; I will have no other. Blessed be God for giving us an *infallible* standard. Praise be to his holy name forever! And shall I cast aside this revelation from God himself, and submit to be fettered by articles and creeds, the productions of imperfect creatures like myself? No, my dear Sir, God helping me, I never will. The Bible — the Bible for me. I will bind it to my heart; it shall be my guide through life, and my comfort in death.

Would you like, if such a thing were possible, to see an "act of uniformity" introduced among the laws of your country? No, no, you shudder at the thought. That be far from us, you instantly exclaim. But when you attempt to deny me the right of private judgment, and assert that I am a follower of Anti-Christ, because I have followed the dictates of my understanding and conscience, what are you doing but in your heart subscribing to an act of uniformity none the less to be feared and resisted, because it has its strong hold in public opinion, and not in civil laws and establishments?

* It is only when we can forget the hour of death, that we can lay aside our sense of responsibility. I have met with a beautiful anecdote in illustration of this point. At the time when two thousand ministers were ejected in Great Britain for non-conformity, a Fellow of Emanuel College in Cambridge, speaking to another member of the same college, remarked upon the difficulty of conforming *conscientiously*, "but," continued and concluded he, "we must live." To which his friend answered in these four emphatic words, "*But we must die!*"

Digitized by Google

The only unity of faith which we can ever expect to see held "in the bond of peace," is a unity of belief in that which Christ himself declares to be absolutely essential and fundamental; namely, a belief in him as the Messiah, which of course involves a belief in his divine authority. M. Sismondi remarks: "Let a man be suspicious of that person who would interpose between him and his God. Let him suspect the man who would teach him what he ought to believe, and who dares to affirm, that on a doctrine, which he communicates, depends the mercy of the Universal Parent."

You will not deny that the right of private judgment is the great, fundamental principle of Protestantism, the principle of the Reformation. But alas! for frail human nature! those who glory in the name of Protestants — who constantly claim this right for themselves, are unwilling to grant it to others. But I, as a Protestant, and as a responsible being, can never for a moment think of giving up this right. My mind is my kingdom, shall I yield up the throne to a fellow mortal? Over it I can allow no human being to domineer. It belongs to me, and I belong to God. If I have no dominion over my own mind, if I have no prerogative here, where else have I the semblance of one? And shall I lightly yield this high prerogative? No, by the help of God, who gave me my intellectual faculties — my mind — my immortal nature — I will sacredly guard the treasure, though, in the struggle, I should lose all beside.

What has a man that he can call his own, if not his own thoughts, his own opinions? Who would care for

Digitized by Google

the wealth of the world without power over his inner man? What would a man be, if he must surrender his mind to the custody of others? If he must think as others think, and believe as others believe? Oh, when the soul has once felt its own power, and stirred itself up to seek affinity with its God, and plumed its wings for a flight above this world into the pure atmosphere of Heaven, what power ought to detain it, what power *can* detain it here? You may chain the mortal body, you may torture the quivering limbs, but the soul, the soul, who can chain or torture that? If Jesus, the Anointed of God, gives it freedom, if Jesus gives it peace, who can chain or torture it? Unless a man is recreant to himself, none can do it. Unless a man surrenders to the keeping of others that priceless jewel, his inward being, he is free, he is peaceful, though storms rage all around him.

I have, my dear Sir, but little more to say in reply to your communications. They contain many things which I could wish had never been said, but I must regard them as a part of that discipline which is intended to refine and brighten the characters of those who are called to suffer and endure. In conclusion, I will only mention and point out to you one or two expressions which have wounded me to the heart. In one of your letters you say, "give my love and sympathies to your truly (aye, now for the first time truly) afflicted parents;" and in another you remark, that "the very Deist will say, she might at least have waited for the brief period which intervenes between her father and the tomb, before she brought this bitterness to his heart,

Digitized by Google

this reproach to his name,— for what? The mere pride of expressing an opinion, which to conceal (?) would have injured neither herself nor others."

Among the variety of motives which those who cannot possibly know anything about the matter have ascribed to me, the one just quoted stands pre-eminent. But why do you and others lose sight of the plain commands of the gospel? "Judge not, that ye be not judged," is surely as binding on Christians now, as it was when it was uttered. Now when a man *commits a wicked action* — steals his neighbor's property, sets fire to his neighbor's house, or bears *false witness* against his neighbor — men cannot help judging of such actions. They see and know that he has done wickedly, that he has broken the laws of his country and of God; but when they attempt to pass severe and injurious opinions upon the *motives* which may have led an individual to pursue a certain course, which does not interfere with the rights or safety of any other man, what are they doing but violating the plain injunction of the Apostle, who said, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Do they forget that God will surely visit them for these things? that, as they sow, so shall they reap? The habit of ascribing to our fellow creatures any motive rather than giving them credit for good ones, and for what *may be* the true and right ones, is a most injurious habit; and it is alarmingly prevalent. If all men were guided by the *principles* of Unitarianism, which makes the laws of love and the rules of equity stand promi-

Digitized by Google

nently forth, and which, moreover, make men *personally* responsible for their every action, word, and thought, these things would not exist. I do not pretend to say that all Unitarians are thoroughly imbued with that spirit of love which "worketh no ill to its neighbor," but I do say that this law of love to *man* as well as to God, shines conspicuously and beautifully forth from their rational and heart-searching system of faith.

Now, however others may excommunicate and anathematize me, and my opinions, it is *my* joy and rejoicing that I cannot, will not, *dare not*, follow their example. I would not relinquish the delightful brotherhood I feel, with all who in every place acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master, for worlds. No, not for any consideration which could be named. However sternly the majority may cast me out of this delightful fraternity, they cannot shut up my Christian sympathies, or cause me to deny to *them* the Christian name, merely because we give some portions of the Bible a different interpretation. We go to the same fountain of truth; we acknowledge the same Master; we shall, I devoutly and joyfully believe, meet in the same Heaven, and enjoy the same blessedness hereafter. I congratulate myself upon the fact that I can stretch out my arms, and embrace in my sympathy and love the whole Christian world.

But it is no insignificant part of the cross which I now have to bear, that I am in a great measure excluded from the Christian sympathies of my nearest and dearest relatives and friends. It is hard to carry about

Digitized by Google

with me the continual consciousness that they regard me as having placed between myself and them an impassable barrier; and that, according to their way of thinking, there can be between us, on the most momentous of all subjects, no fellowship nor communion. Thus, while my heart is gushing with Christian love and sympathy, and longing to mingle with the hearts of those I love and venerate, its tide is often rudely checked, and turned back again to find a channel in the already overflowing heart from whence it came. This is not imagination. It is sober, mournful truth. I have been told over and over again by my friends, that, on religious subjects, there can be *no sympathy* between us, that I have created a wide gulf of separation between myself and them.

That you, my dear Sir, should be among those who feel thus, I deeply lament. But, as I have already said, it is my happiness, whatever others may think or say, to know that we all acknowledge the same spiritual Head, even Jesus Christ, the Messiah. I cherish the delightful consciousness that we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. I would not, I repeat it, believe as you profess to believe, that all who do not receive the Messiah as the infinite God, are in a fatal, a soul ruining error; I would not believe thus, no, not for ten thousand worlds. I am told, in God's infallible word, that if we believe that Jesus is the *Son* of God, we shall have eternal life. This you believe, and this we, Unitarians, also believe; and if your faith and ours on this Son of God, is that sort of

Digitized by Google

faith which will bring forth "the fruits of holiness," the "end" will be, to you and to us, "everlasting life." *Thus* will I always endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This belief— that even those who differ from me in opinion may be in the way to Heaven — shall ever be my joy and rejoicing, and it is a joy no man can take from me.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXIV.

MENTAL SUFFERING.

MY DEAR SIR:

YOUR supposition, that my mind must be "deeply exercised — perhaps harassed and jaded — perhaps distracted" — is partly correct and partly incorrect. It certainly is, and has been "deeply exercised," and I hope will continue to be so to the end of my life, while I am striving to "forget the things that are behind, and to reach forward to those that are before;" but I cannot say that it is *now* "harassed" — "jaded" — or "distracted." God has given me strength to bear all that has come upon me *in connection with* my change of opinions. As regards the change itself, I never was so wedded to my own opinions that I could not *rejoice* to resign them when I believed them to be erroneous. I have, from my earliest years, cherished with jealous care that honesty of mind and purpose, which would render me ever ready to acknowledge the right, and repudiate the wrong, *let the consequences to myself be what they might.*

You inquire, "how can a separation from a faith, so cherished and fully confided in from infancy, be made

Digitized by Google

without those deep pangs which nearly resemble the sundering of the heartstrings? I will say nothing," you remark, "of associations, of relatives, or of friends. In a step so momentous, I presume you have considered, mainly, the one — the paramount question — what is truth? What is duty?"

In reply to your inquiry, I answer, that it is *because* I have *not* separated myself from the faith I have "confided in, and cherished from infancy," that I have felt no "pangs" like "the sundering of the heartstrings." It is because I feel that I still retain all that was valuable about that faith, and have only cast off what, in my view, clouded my understanding, and fettered my spirit, that I have no feeling in regard to my present position — I mean, *so far as concerns myself* — save that of deep thankfulness and sacred joy. What I have suffered in being the innocent and unwilling instrument of pain and anguish to those whom I love better than life, the omniscient Father of us all can only know.

You proceed to say, "my object in addressing you is not to argue the question, whether our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is truly God as well as man, or not. I am not so vain as to suppose that anything I can say would produce a convincing effect upon your mind, after the arguments of your pious parents had been in vain exhausted. But I did hope, that a word might be dropped, which, by the grace of God, might arrest your attention, and lead you to pause, ere you made that fearful leap, which in its consequences must be grievous, if not ruinous."

It appears to me, my dear Sir, that, among most of

Digitized by Google

those who are styled Orthodox, there is a most singular mixture of meek humility and overbearing pride. It would seem by the paragraph last quoted, that you have a very humble opinion of your own powers; and yet you pronounce yourself to be right, and declare me to be wrong, with the most oracular air. You do not imagine, you say, that anything you could offer would produce a convincing effect upon my mind. Then one of three things must be true; either you can give no satisfactory reasons for your belief — or I cannot comprehend them — or I am determined not to receive them, whether they be true or false. Now, if I cannot comprehend them, of course I cannot be convinced by them; and you will hardly be prepared to aver, either that you have no satisfactory or convincing reasons for your faith, or that I am determined not to be influenced by evidence. But, *if you have good and satisfying reasons to offer*, and you think I am capable of appreciating them, and you believe that I am an honest and sincere inquirer after truth, I cannot imagine *why* you should suppose that nothing you can say would produce "a convincing effect upon my mind."

In regard to that mysterious "*word*" which you hoped might be "dropped," and which, by the grace of God, might arrest my attention, you were indulging a vain expectation. I think we abuse the grace of God when we expect from it such effects as these; — effects without a cause. If a word is dropped which causes me to ponder, and leads to desirable results, it is the grace of God which sent me that word, but it is made effectual *because* I ponder upon it, and thus it produces

Digitized by Google

its effect in a natural way. But, remember, if you drop any "word" from which you can hope for good results, it must be a *reasonable* word, addressed as if to a reasonable being. I believe that the grace of God comes to us as to reasonable creatures, and not in any mysterious way — leading us to Heaven without our knowledge or consent.

Your letter proceeds, "I would not grieve nor offend you by the utterance of a single unkind word; but I have no hesitation in pronouncing Unitarianism — much as I respect many of the learned divines and statesmen who have embraced that faith — to be a damnable heresy — an unscriptural dogma — an utter rejection of the Saviour, in all the affairs and relations in which he can be properly termed a Saviour." Soft and kind words these are, truly! I acquit you, my dear Sir, of any *intention* to wound my feelings, but when you use such language concerning the faith which I have embraced, from a sober conviction of its agreement with the revealed word of God, I cannot think you have shown that mildness which is so highly recommended by our divine Master, or that "moderation" which St. Paul advises us to show to "all men." What useful purpose do such denunciations serve? They can but frighten the weak and credulous, but have no effect upon a mind that is searching for truth, and asks *a reason* for every opinion. You might easily have given me your reasons for believing Unitarianism to be so pernicious and dangerous a system, without calling it by such hard names; and such a course would have a far greater effect upon a reasonable mind than the one you have pursued.

Digitized by Google

It is a striking proof to many persons of the untenableness and unreasonableness of orthodox theology, that its advocates so generally resort to denunciation and invective. It would be far better, my dear Sir, for you and your cause if you could persuade yourself and others to exhibit more of the calmness and courtesy which are *usually* the accompaniments of conscious strength and rectitude. When I hear Unitarian Christianity thus furiously attacked, I am inclined to apply to it the remark made by M. Cheneviere in regard to the Genevan churches. "Geneva," says he, "is attacked because it is in advance of the other churches in the nineteenth century, as it was in the sixteenth; the time will come, when it will receive as many commendations and blessings for its present conduct, as of late it has experienced insults." This is my candid opinion and belief in regard to Unitarianism in general.

A most beautiful exhibition and definition of Christian charity was given by Frederic Augustus, the late Duke of Sussex, and brother to George the Fourth, in a letter to the venerable Dr. Robbins, Librarian of the Historical Society's Library at Hartford, on the occasion of his presenting him with a copy of the first edition of the Bishop's Bible, printed in London in 1568. Speaking of the Bible, he says: "That holy book is the one I consult most. Although I believe I read it differently from most people, I do so with great humility, but with equal circumspection, not taking the *dictum* of any man, and endeavoring to make out the real meaning and intention of the inspired writer, which I fear is not so particularly attended to as should be the

Digitized by Google

case; but *I do this in charity with all men, respecting the opinions and prejudices of every one; provided he be honest*, but adhering steadily to my own, *without forcing them upon others;* and this I believe to be the true Christian principle, CHARITY TO ALL." Oh divine and beautiful charity, called by St. Paul the greatest of the Christian virtues, I rejoice to believe that thou hast not quite departed from our world!

Now I admire and love Unitarianism because one of its most distinguishing features is this same heaven-born Charity. In my reading of Unitarian works, and in my personal intercourse with Unitarians, I always find them ready and willing to give credit to others for the same virtues of sincerity and conscientiousness which they assume for themselves, and to allow to others the same rights and privileges which they claim for themselves.* This willingness, I am sorry to confess, I do not find among the Orthodox, though to this *general* remark I would make some delightful and hon-

* Archbishop Tillotson has rendered this testimony to the gentle spirit maintained, in controversy, by Unitarians. "To do right," he says, "to the writers on that side, I must own, that generally they are a pattern of the fair way of disputing, and of debating matters of religion without heat and unseemly reflections on their adversaries. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from passion and transport, which becomes a serious and weighty argument, and, for the most part, they reason closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency, and yet with smartness and subtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words — virtues to be praised wherever they are found, yea, even in an enemy, and very worthy our imitation."—Archbishop Tillotson: *Works*, as published by himself, Serm. xliv. p. 537.

Digitized by Google

orable exceptions. But, with all their charity, Unitarians are by no means *indifferent* to the truth. Far from it. It is because they prize the truth so highly that they are not willing to take it second-handed, but insist upon receiving it only as it came from God himself, that they are thus abused. It is because they will not subscribe to the words of *man*, that those who do subscribe to them thus denounce and unchurch them. They think that it is *of the utmost consequence* what a man believes, for they are obliged to mourn over the effects produced by what they deem erroneous views. But while they assert, and maintain, and defend, what they believe to be truth, they do not denounce and frown upon those who hold different views. They think them in great error, and they tell them so ; but they do not feel themselves called upon to dictate to others as to what they shall or shall not believe.

After all, when you call Unitarianism "a damnable heresy — an unscriptural dogma — an utter rejection of the Saviour," — it amounts to no more than an individual opinion ; and all that I have to say is, that my opinion is a very different one. But when you shall attempt, in the calmness of Christian love, to *prove* your assertions, I will listen to you with the greatest pleasure, and give to your arguments the best consideration of which I am capable. You may oppose my opinions as much as you please, if you will only do it in the right way. Argue me out of them if you can ; if they are erroneous, the sooner I am convinced of it, the better ; but personal reproach or harsh invective against a man or his opinions, will do nobody any good. There is a vast

Digitized by Google

deal of religious intolerance in the Protestant world, and though, upon the whole, true Christian light and liberty are making progress, there are some sects, which, alarmed for their ecclesiastical power, are drawing tighter and tighter the cords which bind them together, to the exclusion of all others. We all have a stake in this great matter; and if God will give me strength, I hope to do my part in exposing and resisting intolerance in all its forms and under all its disguises.

Religious controversy is always useful when it is conducted in a proper spirit; but, alas! how seldom do we find this the case! The Apostle Paul is a safe model for every man. He was constantly engaged in controversy; he contended "earnestly" for the faith, but his weapons were those of sound argument and affectionate persuasion, and not those of invective and reproach. And granting that St. Paul sometimes used strong expressions, you must remember that he was an inspired man, and that you are not; and you must likewise remember that expressions in common use at that period are not in common use now, and ought not to be applied as our language to our contemporaries.

But I am ready to admit that anything is better than a dead calm. Give us a storm rather than a calm; there is more danger, but there is generally some progress. A calm lulls us to sleep; while a storm awakens us, quickens us, calls forth our energies, and gives us the teachings of experience. There was no controversy, worthy the name of controversy, in the dark ages; and who would wish again to see such times as those? Who would wish that gloomy night — that blackness of darkness — to return?

Digitized by Google

But I proceed to notice another portion of your letter; and, to do this, I must introduce topics which have been more than once noticed before. You say: "Rob *Him* (that is, Christ) of his divinity, — *He* who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' and what, oh what in mercy's name, in reason's too, becomes of atonement, of expiation, of mediation, of his gracious, invisible presence amid all the assemblies of his worshippers on earth, and the efficacy of his intercession in Heaven? You may think it harsh and uncharitable, as well as bold, thus unqualifiedly to make so sweeping an assertion. But I am confident — I hope with no vain confidence — upon this subject. My own salvation depends upon the fact, that Jesus Christ is omnipotent to save — omnipotent in his own undelegated, underived merits, to save to the uttermost. I have, I trust, committed the keeping of my soul to his hands, and am persuaded that he is *able* to keep that which I have delivered to him."

I shall not have a great deal to say in reply to this quotation. The ideas are so exactly those which were contained in other letters, that I have become somewhat wearied with their repetition. I am a little surprised that you should bring forward the clause "thought it not robbery, &c." when, as a proof text for the divinity of Christ, it has been given up by so many Trinitarians. The following remarks from "Emlyn's Humble Inquiry," may never have met your eyes. "As to that place," he says, "which is corruptly rendered in our translation, 'he thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' Phil. ii. 6, it is confessed by our adversaries

Digitized by Google

themselves, that it should be read thus, viz. that he did not *assume*, or arrogate, or snatch at an equality with God, or covet to appear in the *likeness* of God; the words are never known to be used in any other sense, as is shown by Dr. Tillotson in his Discourses against the Socinians; also by Dr. Whitby in his exposition on that place; and others. So that this rather *denies* than asserts Christ's equality to God, though he was in the *form of God*, as that notes the outward *resemblance* of him in his mighty power and works, which is the constant meaning of the word *form* in the New Testament."

Pitkin, in his reply to Baker, after proving that the text, even as it now stands in our common version, is entirely in accordance with Unitarian views, and utterly at war with those of Mr. Baker, goes on to say, "But it seems, that he (Mr. Baker) was fully aware that this passage is condemned as a mistranslation. He says, 'I am aware that those who reject our doctrine give another rendering to this passage, and indeed to *every* passage which we have quoted, or shall yet quote, numerous as they are! Now, is it not marvellous that *so* many passages have been wrongly translated?' But why," continues Mr. Pitkin, "does he say that *those who reject* our doctrine give another rendering to this passage? Dr. Adam Clarke renders it thus: 'Who being in the form of God, did not think it a matter to be earnestly desired to appear equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, &c.' Tillotson, a distinguished Archbishop of the Episcopal Church, renders it, 'Did not *arrogate* to himself to be equal with God.'

Digitized by Google

The celebrated Whiston translates it thus: 'Who being in the form of God, did not think this likeness to God a thing to be eagerly retained, but humbled himself, &c.' Another rendering is, 'did not think of the robbery, the being equal to God.'"

Burnap says, in the preface to his excellent Expository Lectures: "So much is the Trinity a matter of inference, even from them, (alluding to the passages brought in its support,) that it is said, and I believe justly, that there is not one of them, which has not been given up, as proving nothing to the point, by some one of the ablest defenders of the doctrine." *

But I proceed to another point. If by robbing Christ, as you term it, of his essential divinity, we blotted God entirely out of the universe, there would be good and great reason for your pathetic interrogation, "oh what in mercy's name, in reason's too, becomes of atonement, of expiation, of mediation, and of his gracious, invisible presence amid all the assemblies of his worshippers on earth, and the efficacy of his intercession in Heaven?" The atonement in which I believe, does not require an infinite sacrifice — an Almighty victim — the death of *a God!* I am aware that I am using contradictory terms, but I cannot avoid it under the circumstances. To meet Trinitarians on their own ground, contradictory propositions are unavoidable. If God saw fit to provide the means of atonement, or reconciliation, I do not see why he could not choose just what instrument he

* For proof of this, see a remarkable work called *Concessions of Trinitarians.*

Digitized by Google

pleased. Its efficacy would be abundantly guaranteed from the fact that it was provided by our Almighty Father. And even on the supposition that Christ died as an "expiation" or substitute, which, of course, I do not admit, I cannot see any reason why the substistute might not be just what the Supreme Ruler chose to provide. The old idea that because sin is an infinite evil, as it is alleged to be by some, it requires an infinite atonement, is, I believe, nearly exploded. I now and then hear it advanced, by those who are somewhat behind the times, but I have likewise heard it pronounced by Trinitarian divines, a fallacious argument. Neither sin, nor the atonement for sin, *can* be infinite, for sin is committed by finite beings, and it is not pretended by those who hold the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, that the *infinite* part of Christ's nature died upon the cross.

In regard to the necessity of an infinite mediator, Emlyn says: "I judge, that to assert Jesus Christ to be the Supreme God, *subverts* the Gospel doctrine of his mediation; for if I must have one, who is Supreme God and man, for my mediator with God, then, when I address Jesus Christ as the Supreme God, *where* is the God-man that must be my mediator with him? To say he mediates with *himself*, is the same as to say that I must go to him without a mediator; and turns the whole business of mediation into a metaphor, contrary to the common sense of things, as well as against the Scripture."

Now, I ask, is he mediator in his divine or in his human nature? If in his human, he cannot, *according*

Digitized by Google

to your ideas, know what all God's creatures want and pray for. If he mediates in his divine nature, or in both united, then, as Emlyn says, he mediates with himself. But St. Paul says, 1 Tim. ii. 5, "There is but one God, and one mediator between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus." "Never let us fear," says Emlyn, "but St. Paul knew how to describe the mediator between God and men, without leaving out the better half of him, or the principal nature. Our mediator, according to him, was only called a 'man;' who also is *by office* a God, *or ruler over all*, made so by him who puts all things under him."

In regard to your remark concerning "his gracious, invisible presence amid all the assemblies of his worshippers on earth," I believe in it as firmly as you do, though in a different sense. I believe that he is with them by his recorded words, by the Spirit of his Gospel, by the influence of that religion which he came to establish. Emlyn shows that Baxter, and many others reputed orthodox, believed that an inherently divine nature was not necessary to the possession of such knowledge of earthly affairs as Christ has ascribed to himself. "The reverend Mr. Baxter," he says, "in his notes on Eph. iv. 16, plainly intimates, that he conceives an angel might be made capable of ruling the Universal Church on earth by legislation, judgment, and execution; for having said this task was impossible to any power but divine, he corrects himself by adding, *or angelical at least;* and sure the *man* Christ's ability is far superior to angels; besides that, he has them ministering to him, and giving him notice of matters, if

Digitized by Google

there be any occasion; for he has seven principal spirits, who are the 'eyes of the Lamb sent forth through all the earth,' as the same writer interprets Rev. v. 6."

"So," continues Emlyn, "the author of the little book, called, *The Future State*, the same who wrote *The Good Samaritan*, a worthy divine of the Church of England, says many very rational things concerning the large extent of Christ's human knowledge; that probably 'he can as easily inspect the whole globe of this earth, and the heavens that compass it, as we can view a globe of an inch diameter!' p. 46, 47. 'That he intercedes *as man*, and can he intercede in a case he knows not?' So again, p. 150. The like says Limborch in his Theol. Christ. lib. 5, c. 18."

He next adds the testimony of Dr. Thomas Goodwin, "where he says, 'the *human* understanding of Christ takes in all occurrences which concern his Church.' And that, as he said, 'All power in heaven and earth is given me of my Father,' so might he say, 'All knowledge in heaven and earth is given me,'—that 'his beams pierce into every corner'—that 'he knows the sore of every heart.' And he concludes with these remarkable words, 'that as a looking glass wrought in the form of a globe, represents the images of all that is in the room, so the enlarged human understanding of Christ takes in all things in heaven and earth at once.' It seems," says Mr. Emlyn, "these men did not take it to be the peculiar perfection of the divine nature to know the *hearts*, so as that *no creature* could partake of it by divine assistance and revelation." I believe these are the sentiments of men whose orthodoxy was never called in question.

Digitized by Google

There are a great many ways in which this promise we have been considering, and that other promise, "Lo, I am with you always," can be fulfilled, without supposing Christ to be an omnipresent being. If we *abide* in him, and his words *abide* in us, *is he not with us always?* Do we not say of the good man who hath left the legacy of his pure spirit behind him, "He being dead, yet speaketh?" Is not, in a sense, the spirit of WASHINGTON with us still? And is it not our earnest hope and prayer that his spirit may burn and glow in the hearts of his countrymen, even to the end of the world? If then Christ "*is the true vine, and we are the branches*" — if, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so no more can we, except we abide in Christ, is he not always with those *thus united to him?* Are not his *commands* always with us? And here let me pause, and entreat you to ponder with me those significant words, in his last address to his disciples before his crucifixion, "This is my commandment, *that ye love one another.*"

But further, are not Christ's *promises* always with us? Is not his wonderful *example* always before us? Who is the Christian's companion but him whom he has chosen as his guide to Heaven? Is he not "the good Shepherd," and do not his sheep *hear his voice*, and follow him as they will not follow a stranger?

But I pass on to another topic. I certainly do, as you seem to apprehend I may, "think it harsh and uncharitable, as well as bold," to make use of the epithets with which you have denounced Unitarianism; viz. "a damnable heresy — an unscriptural dogma —

Digitized by Google

an utter rejection of the Saviour." These are certainly very hard names. I not only think them harsh and uncharitable, but I think still further, that by such a course you seriously injure yourself, and the cause you are endeavoring to advocate. To use the language of a writer in the Christian Examiner for March and April, 1826, "It is not the way to conciliate, and increase converts; but it drives some away in disgust and sorrow, and it feeds the worst passions of those who remain behind. How childish, moreover," says he, "to be calling names, and dooming this one and that one to hell! Does it not at least reveal a woful poverty of argument? Unitarian churches have been filled rather than emptied by these bitter denunciations from abroad; for, after all, men will venture to such places, with the curiosity that leads youth to creep to the brink of precipices, to see what is there. A glorious prospect, on a safe footing, often rewards both kinds of adventurers."

No, Sir, you are not aware how much you lose by an indulgence in such expressions as those you have unhesitatingly used. As for me, I will always endeavor to speak what I regard to be "the truth, *in love;*" and it shall be my aim, as it is now my desire and my intention, to follow the direction of the Apostle Peter, "Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, *with meekness and fear.*" * And I call upon all those who

* Paul, too, gives excellent advice on the subject. In his last letter to Timothy, after speaking of those questions which "gender strifes," he says, "And the servant of the Lord must not

Digitized by Google

love candor and fair dealing to examine and decide for themselves whether the ground taken by the orthodox, against Unitarians and Unitarianism, is, or is not, unfair and incorrect; and whether the anathemas which are so lavishly thundered against them, are, or are not, deserved.

But I am tired of this style of controversy, and will therefore bring this long letter to a close by congratulating you upon the "confidence" you feel in regard to your salvation, and by earnestly expressing the hope that it may indeed be "no vain confidence."

strive; but be *gentle* unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Now, even if you class me with those who "oppose themselves," though verily I think I am more opposed than opposing, for I only ask to judge for myself, and have no desire to thrust my opinions upon any body,—you must perceive that you have not, in reproving me, followed St. Paul's most excellent advice.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXV.

AN EXTRACT.

My dear Sir:

What you say in regard to the danger and folly of examining into other systems of faith than those which we have already embraced, though, in my view, a singular and unsound opinion, is, I am well aware, by no means an uncommon one. You will find it in almost every *orthodox controversial work* that has ever been written. But allow me to quote from your letter a sentence or two. The first remark I shall notice is this: "Educated as you have been from early childhood in the doctrine of the Trinity, you may have been led to suppose that your belief therein has been wholly owing to the accident of your birth and education, and the bias given to your youthful mind; and, impressed with this thought, you may have considered it right and proper to examine into all the arguments urged in favor of an opposite belief." I will interrupt the quotation here, merely to say, that I examined into no arguments in favor of an opposite belief, *till I had examined the Bible*. I endeavored to read the New Testament as if I had never seen it before, and it was *there* I found

Digitized by Google

the arguments that established me in my present belief; it was *from thence* that I was *obliged* to avow myself a Unitarian. But to proceed: "This course," you observe, "however seemingly wise, is not only fraught with the greatest danger, but it is really characteristic of the deepest folly. It is, I believe, the most subtle of all Satan's schemes to mislead the sincere inquirer after truth. Nay, he sometimes *does* proceed a step further, and is willing to allow the inquirer to pray for Divine Guidance, and to hold the Bible in one hand if he can only plant heresy in the other. There is no way to see the truth but in the light of the truth; and when the truth is once established, *no counter arguments can have any form or validity.* This is a fundamental principle in all reasoning, else nothing can be established or relied on. Now if I can prove the Divinity of Jesus Christ from the Scriptures, I will hail it as a truth, embrace and rely upon it as a truth, nor care a straw for all the arguments that can be raised in opposition, knowing, *that two opposite doctrines cannot be substantiated from the same premises.*"

I grant, my dear Sir, the correctness of one of your remarks, which appears to me to be a self-evident proposition. The remark to which I allude is this, "There is no way to see the truth but in the light of the truth." But the conclusions to which you come from such correct premises are by no means, it appears to me, correct or legitimate ones. The reason is very obvious. Conclusions depend, in a measure, upon the meaning and the sense which we give to the terms of our starting proposition. Now, by the expression, "the light of

Digitized by Google

the truth," I should understand that light which shines from the *whole* Bible. I regard the Bible as a harmonious whole, and, as such, it is a light for our feet, and a lamp to our paths. In the light which shines from the Bible — as from one undivided source, as from a central sun—I expect to discover truth. But by the same expression "the light of the truth," you seem to indicate the light of some *one* truth, and that a truth acknowledged not to be *explicitly* stated in direct terms anywhere in the Bible — in terms, I mean, such as these, *Jesus Christ is the infinite God.* The truth to which you allude is only *inferential.* To this inferred, obscurely stated truth, taken alone, you would make everything else bend. But this method, I should imagine, will prove *too much* ever to make it a favorite one with you. Do you not see, that, in this way, you can most effectually overturn your own faith in the Trinity? Take the certainly revealed — *explicitly stated* — and firmly established truth that "Jehovah is *one*" — and the light of such a truth as this is a very different one from that of the *inferred* truth to which you have alluded, as different as the light of the sun is from that of a feeble, flickering taper; take, I say, the truth that "Jehovah is one," and how can you ever consistently prove, according to your own showing, that he is *three?* Take also the certain truth that Jesus Christ was a finite man, capable of suffering, and how can you prove, *from your premises*, that he is the infinite God? In fact, you can prove, or disprove anything from any book, by following, *in all its parts*, the method you propose. Therefore, though we both

Digitized by Google

agree to the proposition that "there is no way to see the truth but in the light of the truth," we give the terms of the proposition an entirely different meaning; and there can be no argument between two or more persons till they agree in their premises; nor can they be said to *agree* till they understand *in the same sense the terms* of those premises.

You next proceed, my dear Sir, to question me thus: "And why need you, Madam, 'lay again the foundation of your faith?' Have you been charmed by the seductive voice of a vain philosophy? Why then are you wavering and unestablished in the faith '*as you have been taught?*'" These interrogations do not appear to me to require any specific answer, since they are merely founded on your individual sentiments in regard to matters about which there is a vast difference of opinion. I will therefore pass on.

You now call my attention to Colossians, 2d chapter, and 8th verse, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," &c., and you say, "Now it is remarkable that the Apostle, in this and the preceding chapter, had been teaching the Doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ — that he is God over all — the Creator of the Universe; — and that by him all things consist."

I am far from admitting that the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Colossians teach anything like the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ, in the Trinitarian sense. Let us pause for a while, and examine them together. In the second and third verses God and Christ are spoken of as distinct beings. So

Digitized by Google

they are in the 12th and 13th verses, where the Father is said to have translated believers into the kingdom of his dear Son. In the 15th verse this Son is declared to be the *image* of God," and " the firstborn of every creature." Now the " image " of anything *cannot* be the thing itself, and a " creature " cannot be the Supreme Creator. In the two succeeding verses, the 16th and 17th, I presume you find your chief and irresistible argument. Let us therefore give them a special, and earnest, and *candid* examination.

But first let me make a simple remark. It should be borne in mind that the Apostle was writing this Epistle to the Colossians, to assure them of the fact that they were under *a new dispensation introduced by Christ*, who had full power and authority for this end. He was opposing, on the one hand, the Judaizing teachers, who were endeavoring to impose upon the Christian Church the ritual law ; — and, on the other hand, the philosophizing converts from heathenism, who were aiming to incorporate with the new religion the subtleties of their old philosophy. Paul is writing to remind them of the fact that the simple religion introduced by Jesus Christ was the true faith — that which they had been *taught* — and in which they were to continue. Now let us examine the 16th and 17th verses, with this idea — namely, that he was writing about Christ's *new dispensation* — strongly impressed upon our minds.

You will observe that he does not say that by him were heaven and earth created, but only " *all things* which are in heaven and in earth." Now, if the ex-

Digitized by Google

pression "all things" can be proved to refer to the *new spiritual creation* Christ came to effect, your argument, which makes it prove his divinity only on the supposition that it refers to the *natural* creation, falls entirely to the ground.

The effects produced by the Gospel, the new and radically different state of things which had followed and were still to follow its introduction — are very often spoken of under the figure of *a creation*. Turn to Ephesians ii. 10, and you will find that believers are spoken of as *created* in or through Christ Jesus, *unto good works*. In remarking upon this verse, Priestley says, "We see here in what sense Paul sometimes uses the term creation; viz. as denoting the renovation of the world by the Gospel; and when we elsewhere in the Epistles read of the creation of all things by Jesus Christ, the meaning is defined and explained by such passages as these."

Again, see Eph. i. 10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one *all things in Christ*, which are in Heaven, and which are on earth." Here we have the very same expression "all things," certainly applied to spiritual existence alone.*

* Since writing the above, I have met with some remarks of Professor Norton upon the passage we are considering; perhaps they will interest you, and serve to strengthen my position. "In this passage," he says, "there are some expressions which require explanation. God, says St. Paul, 'has transferred us from the empire of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son.' To this metaphor much of the following language corresponds. It was this kingdom which had been newly *created*, that is, had been

Digitized by Google

The Apostle then goes on to specify what he meant by the term "all things." "Whether," says he, "they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers;" these expressions seem plainly to show that he does not refer to the material creation. Turn to Eph. i. 21, and you will observe that these expressions "principalities and powers," &c., refer to different degrees of spiritual existence. Some understand these titles to have relation to the "various orders of angelic beings," and suppose this text asserts "Christ's dominion over

newly *formed*: for it is thus that the word rendered *created* is to be understood. We find it, and its correlatives, repeatedly used in a similar sense by St. Paul, namely, to denote the moral renovation of men by Christianity. Thus he says: —

'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. *The old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.*' 2 Cor. v. 17.

'For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' Gal. vi. 15.

'For we are God's workmanship, created through Christ Jesus unto good works.' Ephes. ii. 10.

'Put on the new man, who is created in the likeness of God, with the righteousness and holiness of the true faith.' Ephes. iv 24.

The language from the Epistle to the Colossians, in which Christ is said to have created all things, is to be explained in a corresponding manner. He created all things *in the new dispention*, in the kingdom of Heaven. It has been understood as declaring, that the *natural creation* was the work of Christ. But it is obvious at first sight, that the words used are not such as properly designate the objects of the *natural world*; and not such, therefore, as we should expect to be employed, if these were intended. In speaking of the natural creation, the same Apostle refers it to God in different terms — to 'the living God, who made Heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them.' Acts, xiv. 15."

Digitized by Google

the angelic world." Schleusner thinks that they refer to human magistrates. Others think that they "most aptly denote the several ranks of dignity and authority in the Church, viz., priests, prophets, apostles, &c., over all of whom Jesus is elevated, as the head of this new dispensation." Imp. V. Priestley says that this verse is explained by the next one, where Christ is said to be "head over all things to the Church."

Norton, in commenting on Col. i. 16, says: "But what is meant by the Apostle when he speaks of Christ as creating things heavenly and unseen, thrones, principalities, governments, and powers? I answer, that Christ is here spoken of by him as the founder and monarch of the Kingdom of Heaven; and that this kingdom is conceived of, not as confined to earth, but as extending to the blessed in Heaven, to those who have entered, or may enter, on their reward. Christ being represented under the figure of a king, and his followers being those who constituted the subjects of his kingdom, their highest honors and rewards are spoken of, in figurative language, as thrones, principalities, governments, and powers. He himself said to his Apostles, 'In the regeneration,' that is, *in the new creation*, for the terms are equivalent — 'In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' But the Kingdom of Heaven, including the seen as well as the unseen, the earthly as well as the heavenly, the terms in question are to be understood, not merely as referring to the rewards of the blessed in Heaven, but as denoting likewise the highest

Digitized by Google

offices and dignities of this kingdom on earth; the offices of those who were ministers of Christ, its king, his apostles and teachers. The purpose of St. Paul is to declare, that Christ is the former and master of the whole Church on earth and in Heaven; of the whole community of the holy; that he is the author of all their blessings; that all authority among them is from him; that all are ruled by his laws; that the whole kingdom on earth and in heaven exists through him, and, figuratively speaking, 'for him,' as its monarch." Now, my dear Sir, does it not seem certain that the creation spoken of in the verses we have been considering, is entirely a spiritual creation, and not the natural one; and, if not, those verses do not support your argument.

But, further, let this creation have been either a natural or a spiritual one, we see that in Ephesians iii. 9, it is ascribed *to* GOD, *through Christ*. Paul there speaks of "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, *who created all things by Jesus Christ*, to the intent that now unto the *principalities and powers* in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Pitkin says, that, "In regard to those passages which represent Christ as being engaged in the works of Creation and Preservation, it is the opinion of many distinguished Theologians that they refer to the new *Spiritual Creation* which was to be formed and perpetuated through the influences of the religion which he established; and not to the formation and upholding the world of matter. They contend, that 'by him were all

Digitized by Google

things created,' and 'by him all things consist,' which relate to his Mediatorial Kingdom merely, he being '*Head over all things to the Church.*'

"But," says he, "whether they are correct or not in these opinions, does not in the least affect the decision of the question now before us. It matters not whether our Lord is engaged in the works of creating and upholding the material, or merely the moral world. The only point which in this connexion demands our attention, is, does he create and uphold as the Eternal God, *or only as a qualified instrument of Divine Power?* In reference to this, hear his own express declarations: 'I can of mine own self do nothing.' John v. 30. And again, John v. 19, 20, 'The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do.' 'The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.' And again, John v. 26, 27, 'The Father *hath given* to the Son authority.' Again, Matt. xxviii. 18, 'All power *is given* unto me.' Such is the explicit testimony of Jesus himself. Much more of a like character might be added, but more is not needed. Comment upon these texts seems to be superfluous. They most obviously show, that *whatever Christ performs*, is in consequence, not of his own *underived* power, but by authority and power *delegated* to him as the highest Agent of the Deity."

I believe, my dear Sir, we have now examined all the texts preceding the verse to which you especially directed my attention, namely, "Beware lest any man spoil you, &c.," and I think it has been abundantly proved that they do *not* teach the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Digitized by Google

But I will quote again from your letter. After asserting that Paul had, in the 1st and 2d chapters of the Epistle to the Colossians, been "teaching the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ," you say, "He speaks also of the union of Christ with the flesh, and with believers, as a mystery; and we are particularly admonished 'to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God and the Father and of Christ,' and further to be rooted and built up in him, (Christ,) and stablished in the faith, 'as ye have been taught.' Now Paul had just been teaching the Divinity — the Almighty power — the inherent power — (for the work of creation by proxy is a downright absurdity) — of Jesus Christ; and then, seemingly aware of the danger to which the Colossians would be exposed, he warns them, in the most solemn and energetic manner, *to continue in the faith which they had been taught.*"

I have searched diligently to find, in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Colossians, anything about the "mystery" of "the union of *Christ with the flesh;*"* but it has entirely escaped my notice. In the 25th and 26th verses of the 1st chapter, Paul speaks of the "dispensation of God" which had been given him, and *this dispensation* he calls a mystery, or secret, which, says he, "hath been hid from ages and from generations, *but is now made manifest to his saints,*" and thus he declares the mystery, or secret, to exist no

* Even according to Trinitarian views, Christ, which is not a proper name, but only means *the Anointed* — could never be properly said to be united with the flesh, for it was only "the flesh" which could be "the Anointed."

Digitized by Google

longer, *as* a secret. Again, in the 27th verse, he says, "To whom God would *make known* what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles;" and how does he make it known? What does he declare that mystery to be? He declares it to be, not, as you say, "the union of Christ with the flesh," but, says he, "which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory." And while you are upon this part of the subject, I wish you would read the third chapter of Ephesians, where Paul often speaks of a mystery, by which he means the *new*, and, to the Jews, strange doctrine of the reception of the Gentiles into the same covenant with the Jews; and this mystery, he says, may be *understood*, when it is *read*. Ephes. iii. 4.

Again, in Col. ii. 2, instead of *exhorting* them, as you have expressed it, to the acknowledgment of a mystery, he *prays* for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God;" — *Griesbach*, high Trinitarian authority, omits the rest of the verse.

This, my dear Sir, is all the mystery I can discover, after the most diligent search, in the portion of Scripture to which you have turned my attention; namely, God's design to bestow salvation, *through Christ*, upon *both Jews and Gentiles*; which had been a mystery, or what is the same thing, had been "*hid* from ages and generations," but now, in the fulness of time, "is *made manifest*," and is constantly spoken of as a mystery, or secret, *which had been revealed*.

Digitized by Google

I will only touch upon your remark that "the work of creation by proxy is a downright absurdity," and observe that then you certainly make this charge, namely, that of teaching an absurdity, against the Scriptures. For *whatever the creation was* which is there ascribed to Christ — whether a natural or a moral creation was intended, it is certainly ascribed to Christ as the Agent of another. See Ephes. iii. 9. "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Heb. i. 2. "*By whom* he (that is, God) made the worlds."

You give great prominence to the idea that I have not continued in the faith, *as I have been taught*. Now do you mean as I have been taught by St. Paul, or any other *inspired* writer, or as I have been taught by my human teachers and guides? The latter must be your meaning, for you are complaining of me because I have *changed*, and given up the faith in which I had been *educated*. But I assert, that I have altered my opinion on certain points *because* I find that the inspired writers taught a different doctrine from that in which I had been educated. Yet it is under these circumstances, when I now profess to abide entirely by the teaching of *inspired* men, that you complain of me. You must therefore mean, that I ought to continue in the faith which I derived from uninspired human teachers.*

Now, as I think your application of that text a very different one from that intended by St. Paul, who was speaking of his own teaching, with a knowledge of his own special inspiration, and not of the teachings of those

* See Appendix W.

Digitized by Google

who should live hundreds of years after him, it does not by any means produce the effect you intended. A Roman Catholic, teaching the doctrines of transubstantiation and the worship of saints and saintly relics, might with just as much propriety take that ground with one who was about retracting his Roman Catholic sentiments. Aye, he could do it with vastly more propriety; for it is an essential part of his system that the Scriptures are to be interpreted for individuals by the Church. But this idea is manifestly at war with the fundamental principles of Protestantism, and I feel only sorrow and surprise when I hear such sentiments from the Protestants of the nineteenth century.

But it is time to make another quotation from your letter. You proceed to say, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." "And why?" you ask, "How were they in danger of being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit? What is the point? What the danger? The 9th verse answers the question, '*For* in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' This was a *fact*," you say, "which they were warned not to assail with human reasonings."

And who, my dear Sir, *has* assailed the fact? No Unitarian, that I am aware of, has stricken that verse out of his Bible. I am very sure I have not. I only believe that it does not teach what you assert it teaches —namely, that because the fulness of God dwelt in Christ, he was God himself. But you go on to say, "Could language be more clear and precise? God

Digitized by Google

who declares that he will not give his honor to another, and who claims universal and undivided homage, here affirms that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ; and in Phil. 2d chapter, that universal homage shall be paid to him. To suppose that Jesus Christ, as a mere human, or created Being, is a proper object of Divine worship, is an absurdity too great for even Unitarians. They therefore very modestly deny the declarations of God in toto regarding the honor due to Christ, and in their adorations to God the Father, sometimes allude to the *Son of Mary*, for whose good example's sake God is well pleased to bestow blessings upon mankind. My soul sickens to hear my blessed Saviour so dishonored."

And do you think that Unitarians feel no sickening of soul when they see that men will not believe the words of Christ himself, when he asserts, as he does incessantly, his inferiority to his Father? Do they not feel pained when they hear men insisting that *Supreme* worship and homage belong to him who said to his disciples, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing;" who said to his importunate tempter, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve;" who, when his disciples requested to be taught how to pray, said, "When ye pray, say, *Our Father*, who art in Heaven," &c.? You have alluded to the 2d chapter of Philippians, where universal homage is promised to Christ. But does it follow that *universal* homage should be *Supreme* homage? And why have you overlooked the most important words in the whole passage — the crowning sentence — the climax; namely,

Digitized by Google

that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER?"

But I have done. Your remark concerning the terms in which Unitarians speak of Christ in their adorations to God the Father, scarcely merits notice. I can only say I have never heard such terms used. Unitarians do not believe that for the sake of Christ's good example, God bestows blessings upon mankind. We believe that it is only when we *follow* that good example that God will bless us. And supposing you had heard Jesus called "the Son of Mary?" Was he not Mary's son? Was he not born in Bethlehem, and was he not subject to his parents until he commenced his Heavenly Father's work? Until you can find no more heavy charges against Unitarians than that they call Jesus Christ the Son of Mary, you cannot justly reproach them, much less condemn them.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXVI.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION.

My dear Sir:

You say I would never have arrived at my present conclusions by reading the Bible *alone*, and insinuate that I have received my ideas from Unitarian books. You forget my assertion, in a letter to my father, that my mind was satisfied upon the subject before I had read a single Unitarian author, excepting, of course, the writers of the New Testament. As this matter is evidently misunderstood, I will give a particular account of it.

I started then in my investigation, with one idea firmly fixed in my mind — this idea was the *unity* of God, which doctrine is *certainly* revealed in the *Old* Testament. This, then, I considered *a certain truth*, and now my object in examining the *New* Testament was to learn whether a *Trinity* was there taught. I soon discovered *another* certain truth, namely, that Christ was a distinct being from God; and *another*, namely, that he was called the *Son* of God; and *yet another*, namely, that he was a *human* being. Here, then, were several certain truths, *plainly revealed.*

Digitized by Google

But I soon arrived at some passages, which *seemed* to assert, inferentially, that Christ was *God*. Here, then, was something at variance with those *certain* truths contained in the same revelation. Here was a truth, apparently revealed, which contradicted the certain truth of the Unity of God, and those three other certain truths, namely, that Christ was a distinct being from God, and that he was the *Son* of God, and that he was a human being. These truths were contradicted; but still I saw nothing about the *Trinity*.

I noted down these passages, and read on. The rest of the book still recognised, in the *plainest* and *most explicit* manner, all those certain truths of which I have spoken. The whole tenor of the New Testament certainly proved them. Now what was to be done with those texts which *seemed* to contradict them? I reasoned with myself thus; if, in reading any other book, I should come to hints and statements which seemed to contradict the plain assertions, and to differ from the general scope and tenor of the work, I should endeavor to give to those hints and statements an interpretation and a meaning which would harmonize with what was plainly laid down. To do this, it would not be correct nor natural for me to *assume* incredible propositions. This would be no way to harmonize discordant ideas, nor to reconcile contradictions.

But this strange and unnatural plan, it appeared to me, had been pursued with the Bible. That holy book had been treated as we should not think it right to treat any other. The doctrine that Christ possessed two natures, a finite and an infinite one, had been *assumed*

Digitized by Google

to account for those passages where he seemed to be spoken of as God. I say this doctrine had been *assumed*, for it is nowhere *plainly* laid down. This course I could not justify, and what next was to be done?

Was it not *possible* that those perplexing passages might be interpreted in some other way? If they proved what they were said to prove, namely, that Christ was God, they proved that there were, at the same time, one only God, and two Gods; and that the same being had both a finite and an infinite nature. These things were contradictions, and could not be proved in any way; nor did I see anything about the *mystery* of the *Trinity*. These passages then, *must* have some other meaning. I now read the various interpretations of learned men, both Trinitarians and Unitarians, and was soon satisfied that they did not assert the deity of Christ, but that a fair interpretation *could* be given to all of them, which would perfectly harmonize with those plainly revealed truths, of which I have spoken, and which were likewise taught by the whole tenor of the New Testament. These passages then did not teach the deity of Christ. Christ was not God — the Bible was consistent with itself — and the doctrine of the Trinity existed no longer in my mind as an article of faith.

You say "you should be lost if your own reason were to be your guide." Your expression is rather indefinite, and it depends upon what your *exact* meaning is, whether or not I can agree with you. If you mean that it would be dangerous — aye, fatal — to depend on

Digitized by Google

reason *alone*, I fully and heartily acquiesce in your declaration. But if you mean that reason is to be laid *entirely* aside, I cannot at all agree with you. Without reason, of what *possible* use would a revelation be? Place the Bible in the hands of an idiot, who never enjoyed the gift of reason — or of a madman, whose reason had been dethroned — and what a mockery you make of their sad misfortunes? You cannot then mean that we are to make *no* use of reason. But if you believe that, with the revelation from our Heavenly Father in our hands, we are to use our utmost efforts to ascertain *what* it is that God has spoken, why then, as I said before, in this matter we entirely agree. I am as much opposed as you can be to exalting reason *above* revelation — to deciding what ought and what ought not to be in the Bible; but we must certainly use our highest faculties and our best efforts to ascertain what *is* there. And if the Scriptures any where *seem* to teach doctrines contrary to those which they have elsewhere *plainly* taught, we are bound, if possible, to give those seemingly discordant passages a different construction; and if, as may be the case, we cannot find out what they mean, we must imitate the great John Locke, and humbly say so; and we must patiently wait until we enter upon a more perfect state of existence, when all will be explained to us — when all that is dark will be brought to light — when faith will be exchanged for sight.

The Rev. John Wesley, in his controversy with Toplady concerning *Election*, said, that he would not believe any doctrine which charged God with unright-

Digitized by Google

eousness. No words nor texts of Scripture, he said, would compel him to do it. So I say in regard to the Trinity. No words nor texts of Scripture will compel me to believe that the Bible contradicts itself. We must keep reason in its right place, but we must not undervalue it. It is dangerous to use it rashly, but it is quite as dangerous not to use it at all. There is danger in everything. The very fact that we possess reason places us in responsible circumstances; and responsibility implies danger. Our reason is the highest gift of God; let us see to it that we neglect not "the gift that is in us." If we make no use of our reason, would not our Heavenly Father justly charge us with the guilt of hiding our talent in the earth? Is it not clear, that as each man, in his individual capacity, is responsible to God, so each individual must sift and determine this matter for himself? At the same time, I heartily respond to your exclamation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, *take heed* lest he fall!"

Again, you observe, "When I draw instruction from the Bible, I like to take the *whole* of it." My dear Sir, so do I. And this is a great Unitarian principle. They take the whole Bible, and judge of detached passages by its general scope and tenor. In this position, I am glad to be able to inform you, you will find yourself sustained by the whole body of Unitarians. And it is by adhering strictly to this great, this radical principle of all just interpretation, that they arrive at Unitarianism.

You are certainly laboring under a mistake when you assert that Unitarianism "would persuade men to be at

Digitized by Google

peace with themselves, not to flee from wrath." Unitarianism does not persuade men to a *false* peace. It is not an easy, indolent religion. No, no, very far from it. Let any one read Dewey's Sermons on the Law of Retribution, and see whether Unitarianism points out an *easy* road to Heaven. "This is a system," says Dr. Gannett, "which requires of its disciple the greatest measure of goodness that he can render, which prohibits every indulgence contrary to the strictest virtue, and imposes continual effort and conflict. Who that comprehends its requisitions would ever think of pronouncing them light? Unitarianism as we receive it, the patron of a lax morality and a worldly spirit! Verily, it requires a confidence by no means enviable to make such an assertion in the face of everything that has been said by advocate and by opposer." *

But, the fact is, I know of no easier mode of arriving at Heaven, than by the Calvinistic scheme, if that scheme be true. To depend for salvation entirely upon the merits of another, who has become our substitute, is a very comfortable thing. But then, under these circumstances, what moral progress can a man be expected to make? I joyfully acknowledge that those who hold this faith do make advances in moral growth and vigor; but I believe they do it in the very teeth of their creed, they do it because both Scripture and common sense teach them that "as a man sows, so shall he also reap." On the other hand, the Unitarian doctrine that men are to be rewarded hereafter accord-

* See Appendix L.

Digitized by Google

ing to their works, while it is a doctrine of reason and of revelation, is, from its very nature, a prodigious incentive to constant watchfulness and warfare. All the expressions of the Apostle Paul, in regard to the Christian's life of conflict and danger, Unitarians fully understand, appreciate, *feel*. They well know what he means when he speaks of "striving for the mastery." They can enter into his feelings of joyful exultation when he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight." They believe the Apostle James was correct when he said, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." They attend to the injunction of the Apostle Peter, "Be *diligent* that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." At the same time they believe that their salvation is all of grace, or favor; that it is obtained through the abounding mercy of God, in Christ; who has graciously promised to forgive the sins, and to overlook the shortcomings of those who earnestly repent and endeavor to reform. They believe that the lives which they live in the flesh, they must live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them. They endeavor to follow *him* — *he* is their example — and thus it is they live by faith *in him* — a faith which will inspire them with zeal and with strength to follow him "fully."

It seems strange to me, that any one can believe that the requisitions of the Unitarian faith are easy; that only those who wish to lead careless lives choose that religion. I solemnly declare to you, that I hesitate now at many things which I formerly deemed matters of trivial importance. My standard of gospel morality is higher,

Digitized by Google

ny views are more elevated, my aspirations after moral excellence altogether more ardent than they were before my change of views. I earnestly wish that my standard of duty had been all my life what it is now; it would undoubtedly have saved me a vast amount of sorrow and regret. At the same time I frankly confess, that many things which I once deemed wrong I now think innocent. I have learned, I hope, to discriminate more justly between *essentials* and *non-essentials*; and I am more than ever persuaded that, instead of binding myself by certain outward rules and regulations, the only safe and certain way to live a truly Christian life, is to see faithfully to it that *my heart* is right with God.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXVII.

NO HUMAN CREEDS.

MY DEAR SIR:

You remark that "it is a vain boast of Unitarians that they are free from creeds—the imposition of men." And you make the following inquiry: "When Unitarians are asked about their faith, do they not give the written opinions of their great men — Dr. Channing, and others? And very various," you observe, "their faith is."

I reply, that when Unitarians boast that they have no creeds *imposed* upon them, they make *no* "vain boast." It is a delightful, glorious *truth*. If you were to ask me what my creed was, I should give it to you in the words of Scripture. Ah, I was wrong. Unitarians *have* a creed, which they consider binding upon all. It is contained in the Scriptures. But if you were to say, "This does not satisfy me; you and I give a different interpretation to these very words; I wish to know what *interpretation* Unitarians generally give to those passages." I might *then* refer you to the works of their standard writers, and tell you that you would find in them a faithful exhibition of the Unitarian faith.

Digitized by Google

But I would tell you at the same time that no individual considers himself bound to adopt the views of any other individual, even of Dr. Channing; and Dr. Channing himself has always taken care to have it distinctly understood, that he is only giving *his individual opinions*. Now, referring to certain writers when information is wanted, and being bound by a creed, are very different things. Again, you inquire: "Is it not true, that New England Unitarians, finding skepticism so rife among them, are about to form a creed, which they can show to the world as some fixed representation of their views?" I can only say, in reply, that I have heard of nothing of the kind. It may be the case, however; and where would be the harm? And how would such a proceeding interfere with their great, fundamental principle, that each individual is accountable for his opinions to God alone? Surely, when the religious views of a body of Christians are so shamefully misrepresented and so generally misunderstood, as those of Unitarians are by their Orthodox brethren, *it is high time* that the world should be *enlightened* on the subject; it is high time that these misrepresentations should be exposed, and these misunderstandings, if possible, *removed*. And, as to the assertion that skepticism is "rife among them," I should like to know where it is not? And is Unitarianism to answer for the faults of its professors? Are Unitaririans, as a body, to be held responsible for the speculations of those who call themselves by that name? Then Heaven have mercy upon us *all!*

But you go on to say: "Should my dear friend be suffered to 'believe a lie,' and embrace fully the doc-

Digitized by Google

trines she now avows, I shall be prepared to witness in her downfall and apostacy from the truth, as it is in Jesus, the truth of that fearful declaration, 'the last state of that man is worse than the first.' But I hope otherwise of you, though I thus write. Let me admonish you to be 'slow to speak' on this subject, to weigh well and deliberate long before you embark upon this sea of religious barrenness and unfruitfulness, and before you take the fatal step which will separate you from the *real* friends of the Saviour."

And who, my dear Sir, *are* the real friends of the Saviour? How shall we decide this important question? Did not our Saviour himself teach us how to decide it when he said, "Ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you?" The religion of Jesus Christ is a *practical* religion. When he came to save us — to die for us — he came to show us how we might be saved — to tell us what we should *do* to be saved. He never told us exactly how we should reason, nor, as the Athanasian creed does, what we should "*think;*" he laid down a few fundamental facts, and gave a number of plain commands; they are exeedingly comprehensive and simple; they are so plain, thanks be to God, that he who runs may read; but further than this he did not go, nor did his Apostles.

Another correspondent tells me that I have "wounded the Saviour in the house of his friends." By this I suppose is meant what you have more explicitly expressed in the quotation upon which I have been remarking; namely, that those who belong to the church or "house" from which I have separated myself,

Digitized by Google

are his friends; and that the church or "house" to which I have gone, is composed of his enemies. What right has any church to arrogate to itself the peculiar title of "friends" of Christ, in opposition to those, who, acknowledging Christ as their Lord and Master, are striving to "do" his commandments — aye, and *doing* them too, if we may be allowed to judge by their lives of purity and benevolence? It is high time that men were judged by their fruits, and not by their orthodoxy. It is high time to learn that piety consists in what we "do," and not in what we say. I do not wish to be understood as conveying the idea that our religious belief is not of *consummate importance.* I know that it *is*; for our belief *influences our conduct*; but, in the present day, some men are too apt to rest satisfied with their *orthodoxy.* It must, at least, be acknowledged, that things have that appearance, when men are not willing to allow the name of Christians to those whose speculative opinions they consider unorthodox, even when they seem to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace," &c. Let us welcome as Christians *all* who are earnestly endeavoring to *do* what their Lord has commanded, whatever interpretation they may give to certain passages of Scripture, and however they may decide certain questions which do not in the least affect the question of their Master's *authority.*

Another of your remarks is of the same character as that I have just noticed. "Surely," you say, "you will not be permitted thus to wander from the fold of Christ to be devoured by wolves in sheep's clothing; I

Digitized by Google

cannot believe that you will finally depart; but I shudder to think of the severe chastisements which may be necessary to bring you back." I trust, my dear Sir, you do not believe that I have *wilfully* wandered from what you assert to be the fold of Christ; and if I am anxiously seeking for the truth, even in dangerous paths, I do not see why you should suppose my Heavenly Father would find it necessary to *scourge* me back again. When the shepherd left his ninety and nine sheep to go and seek for the one which had wandered away and was lost, we read that when he had found it, he did not scourge it back to the fold, but laid it "on his shoulders, *rejoicing*." Was not this parable intended as a beautiful illustration of the untiring love of our Heavenly Father? And in regard to the expression, "wolves in sheep's clothing," I am charitable enough to suppose that you used it as a mere figure of speech, without any definite meaning, or particular application. But, *if* you intended to apply it to Unitarians, I will only ask you to compare the controversial writings of the Orthodox and of Unitarians, and then candidly tell me to which you think the term "wolves" will most legitimately apply.

Your wish, so kindly expressed, "that I could have been saved from bringing such a deep and lasting reproach upon our holy religion, exhibits both your love for me, and your zeal for religion. But permit me to say, that, in this instance, I fear your zeal is *more* for certain dogmas which *you think essential* to religion, than for religion itself. And if I bring "a deep and lasting reproach" upon such an exclusive *system*, I

Digitized by Google

have nothing to do but to thank God, and go forward. That is just what I would wish to do. If I can convince any person, be that person ever so insignificant, that a rigid adherence to certain tenets *is not religion*, I shall not have suffered in vain.

One of my friends alluded, in a letter to me, to the "awful lengths" to which I had gone. I was startled, and feared that my friend was under some impression for which there was no foundation. I wrote to request that friend to tell me in plain language, without any figurative embellishment, exactly what was intended by the expression. The reply was, "I know not of any thing more awful than the *crime* of crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame." This was discouraging; I had asked for plain language, and I received a reply couched in highly figurative terms. I protest against this method of arbitrary personal application of figurative language. It is not reasonable, it is not fair. Such charges cannot be met. A question of *interpretation* must first be raised and settled. We must first decide, with mathematical precision, what course of conduct amounts to "the crime of crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame."

I will conclude this communication by merely making a remark or two upon the following sentence of your letter. "You must admit," you observe, "that your your change will be followed by *most serious* consequences. Your writings and opinions have been published to the world. I cannot imagine what the effect will be. Your new friends cannot receive the truths

Digitized by Google

contained in them, and what good effect can they produce on others when they learn that the writer has herself renounced them."

I have somewhere met with the remark, that "religion is a sentiment, and not a science." This very important distinction I wish my friends would endeavor to bear in mind. The power of religion over my *heart* will be in proportion as I bow with reverence, and submit with childlike confidence, to the will and authority of my Heavenly Father, and of his authorized messenger, Jesus Christ; and *not* in proportion to my supposed understanding of the essence or nature of either God or Christ. Viewing religion in this light — as an all-absorbing *sentiment* — I have not changed at all. I have not "renounced" the "sentiments" contained in my published writings. They are dearer to me than ever. And, moreover, my "new friends," by which phrase you mean Unitarians, *can* and *do* "receive the truths" they contain, with the exception of an occasional recognition of certain doctrines. I have never endeavored to settle disputed abstract questions; what I have written has been merely the outpouring of my *heart*; a heart wounded by affliction, and seeking to sustain itself in God, my Father, and in Christ, my Saviour. It is my happiness to know that many Unitarians *have* had their faith strengthened by a simple recital of what God had done for one of his afflicted children, — and have joined with me in my songs of triumph, gratitude, and praise.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXVIII.

EXTRACTS AND REPLIES.

My dear Sir,

You speak of the "shock" you experienced when I "announced myself as decidedly constrained to give up all on which your hopes rest for the salvation of your soul." If you really believe that I have given up *all* on which the sinner's hope can hang, I do not wonder you are shocked. But surely you cannot think so. How shall I convince you that I still rely for salvation upon Him, who, we are taught, is "the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." It *is* by him that I go to the Father. What more can you desire, what more can I say? I believe, as fully as you do, in the atonement, though you and I may differ about the philosophy (if I may so speak) of that atonement.

Again, you say, "Would to God that I could, with the Bible in my hand, believe that, as you have expressed it, if you are in an error, it is not a fatal one. . . . I fully believe," you elsewhere say, "that in renouncing the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus, you renounce the whole system of salvation by grace, through faith in

Digitized by Google

Him as the atoning sacrifice for sin; and that, dying in your present belief, your soul must be lost; while you profess to think that you have found 'a glorious platform' on which sincere Christians of every denomination can meet, and exchange the right hand of fellowship." You further write, "You or we must be *fatally* wrong. It seems plain to me that Christ is God — or, with reverence let me write it — a blasphemer; and that if you rob him of his 'eternal Godhead,' you rob him of the glory that is his due. How then can you feel hurt that your friends express themselves so strongly?"

When I consider what your professed belief upon this subject is, I really cannot wonder at your strong expressions; but I *do* wonder that you can believe there is a *fatal* difference between us. You surely cannot believe that the souls of some whom I could name, who have died in the Unitarian faith, are *lost*. *Show me* where either our Master or his apostles declared that a belief in him, *as the eternal God*, is *necessary* to salvation, and I will acknowledge that you have good reason for this item of your faith; but all I can see that they ever gave as a test of Christian faith was such a belief in Jesus, *as the Messiah*, as would cause men to yield *implicitly* to his authority. They never say it is necessary to our salvation to be certain whether that authority is entirely his own, or is derived from his Father; though, at the same time, they tell us plainly enough from whence it really comes. Yet that is never made a prominent and necessary article of belief. The main point of inquiry is, dost thou believe that Jesus is

Digitized by Google

the Christ — that is, the anointed — he who was to come? If we believe that he came commissioned by God, we shall obey him, and thus be his followers; and, of course, entitled to the Christian name. When the belief of Unitarians leads them to *reject* the authority of Christ, it will be time to deny them the name of Christians; but when they recognize that authority as fully and joyfully as you do, how can you consistently assert that they are not Christians?

I repeat it, we are merely told in the Scriptures, that we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved. And we must see to it that we have such a faith in Christ as will bring forth fruit unto holiness; for we are also informed that *without holiness* no man shall see the Lord. Now, this is *all* which the Scriptures declare to be necessary to salvation; namely, faith showing itself by works. If you can show me one passage in which it is declared that we must regard him who was sent by God as God himself — the same being by whom he was sent — the case will be radically altered, and I will allow that you are right when you insist that I am in a *fatal* error. But until you can show me some such passage — for I want no *inferences* in regard to *fundamental* doctrines — beware how you judge concerning my future prospects; beware how you add to the word of God.

I wish to make a short quotation from the admirable speech of Sir George Saville before the House of Commons, in 1772, in support of a petition presented by many clergymen of the Church of England for relief in the matter of subscription. "If the things which are

Digitized by Google

necessary to salvation," says he, "are not *plainly* revealed, there is no way of salvation revealed *to the bulk of mankind*. Whatever is obscurely revealed will be always obscure, nothwithstanding *our decisions*. It can never be authoritatively determined by men. The only authority which can explain it, and make the explanation a test of faith, is the authority of God. As to what he has plainly revealed, it needs no articles to ascertain its meaning. We should not then adopt views and measures which are contracted and narrow. *We should not set bars in the way of those who are willing to enter and labor in the church of God.* When the disciples came to Christ, and complained that there were some who cast out devils in his name, and said, 'We forbade them, *because they followed not us*'— what did our Saviour do? Did he send them tests and articles to be subscribed? Did he ask them whether they believed this, or that, or the other doctrine? whether they were Athanasians, or Arians, or Arminians? No. He delivered that comprehensive maxim —'He that is not against me, is for me.' Go ye, and say likewise."

But I can bring some names of high authority who did not think as you do upon this subject. DR. DODDRIDGE, it seems, was not willing to deny the name of Christian, nor to refuse "the right hand of fellowship," to those who could not believe in the Trinity. Dr. Kippis, in the *Biographia Britannica*, vol. v. p. 307, thus writes: "Once I remember some narrow minded people of his (Dr. Doddridge's,) congregation gave him no small trouble on account of a gentleman in communion

Digitized by Google

with his church, who was a professed Arian, and who otherwise dissented from the common standard of orthodoxy. This gentleman they wished either to be excluded from the ordinance of the Lord's supper, or to have his attendence upon it prevented; but the doctor declared, *that he would sacrifice his place, and even his life, rather than fix any such mark of discouragement upon one, who, whatever his doctrinal sentiments were, appeared to be a true Christian.*"

Dr. Burton says: "I would willingly admit, that salvation may be obtained without a knowledge of the Athanasian Creed. Thousands and millions of Christians have gone to their graves, who have either never heard of it, or never understood it; and I would add, that, let a man believe the Scriptures, let him profess his faith in Christ *in the plain and simple language of the New Testament*, and he may pass through life as piously and happily, he may go to his grave with as quiet a conscience, and, more than this, he may rise again as freely pardoned and forgiven, as if he had dived into the depths of controversy, and traced the nature of the Deity through the highest walks of metaphysics." *Theol. Works*, vol. 1, *Serm.* xii., p. 283.

Bishop Watson says, when speaking of the Duke of Grafton, who joined the famous Essex Street Chapel, under the pastoral care of the venerable confessor, the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey,— "I never attempted to discourage his profession of Unitarian principles; for I was happy to see a person of his rank professing, with intelligence and sincerity, *Christian*

Digitized by Google

*principles.** If any one thinks that an Unitarian is not a Christian, I plainly say, without being an Unitarian myself, *that I think otherwise.*" *Watson's Life*, vol. i., pp. 75, 76. See also vol. ii., p. 227. See also the remarks of D. Turner of Abingdon, in his *Free Thoughts on Free Inquiry*, &c., where he says, "We should not deny them the honor of the Christian name."

DR. PARR speaks thus: "Undisguisedly and indignantly, I shall ever bear testimony against the uncharitable spirit which excludes the followers of Socinus utterly from the Catholic Church of Christ. Without professing any partiality for Unitarians, I hold that they who acknowledge Jesus Christ *to be the Messiah*; to have had a direct and special commission from the Almighty, to have been endowed supernaturally with the Holy Spirit, to have worked miracles, and on the third day to have risen from the dead, — I hold, that men, thus believing, *have a sacred claim to be called Christians.*" Parr's Works, vol. vii., pp. 9, 10.

Honor be to those liberal hearted men! *There* is, of a truth, the true spirit of Christianity. Why can we not all forget our differences, and go to work *together* for the advancement of our Master's cause — for the spread of our Master's kingdom? The enemies of Christ are taking the advantage — an advantage not to

* This reminds me of a circumstance which recently occurred within my own knowledge. A clergyman visiting a lady who had been brought up in the Presbyterian church, but who was then attending the Episcopal, said to her, "Madam, I hope soon to see you a good Presbyterian." "Sir," she replied, "I would much rather be a good *Christian*."

Digitized by Google

be despised — of the want of union and confidence among his professed disciples. And let us all remember the solemn remark of the immortal Baxter, "Whilst we are wrangling here *in the dark*, we are dying, and passing to the world that will decide all our controversies, and the safest passage thither is *by peaceable holiness*."

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXIX.

CAUSES OF INFIDELITY.

My dear Sir:

I have frequently heard it asserted of late that the present age is preëminently an age of infidelity, and I have unhesitatingly assented to the proposition. I did so because I thought that a belief in certain dogmas was a necessary part of a belief in Christianity itself; and it appeared to me quite certain that those peculiar dogmas *were* losing their hold upon the minds of men. Therefore it was that I verily thought that Christianity itself was every day becoming far less valuable to the majority of men. And it may be so; I do not pretend to judge. If it *be* true that infidelity is on the increase, is it not in a great measure owing to the fact that *tests* are required by those who think they hold ecclesiastical authority, to which men, who value religious freedom, and the right of private judgment, will not submit?

It appears to me that Hume was not far from the truth when he jeeringly asserted, that the popular theology had "a kind of appetite for absurdity, and contra-

Digitized by Google.

diction." And he really seems to have had in his mind persons very much like some of those who live in the present day, when he speaks of "devout votaries, who desire an opportunity of subduing their rebellious reason by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms." What Hume, the infidel, spoke in derision, many sincere Christians earnestly believe and lament. The illustrious Duke of Grafton declared it to have been his opinion that the Christian religion "having been corrupted from very early times by various means, and *these corruptions having been mistaken for essential parts of it*, had been the cause of rendering the whole religion incredible to many men of sense." And Dr. Priestley, in a letter to his friend Mr. Lindsey, speaking of an unbeliever with whom he had been conversing, says, "He, *like thousands of others*, told me, that he was so much disgusted with the doctrines of the church of England, especially the Trinity, that he considered the whole business *as an imposition*, without further inquiry."

Now it is no crime to doubt. The moment a man *honestly* doubts, he shows his anxiety to believe on correct principles. And if men were permitted to doubt, without having the hue and cry of "infidel" raised against them,— if men's doubts were more respected, they would be more calmly and earnestly met, and there would be less infidelity in the world. Many an honest and independent mind, in its search after truth, has become "disgusted" at the injustice with which it has been treated, has given up the search altogether, and taken refuge in the gloomy shades of infidelity, rather

Digitized by Google

than encounter the scorching heat of bigotry. It is a man's own fault, I confess, if he allow himself thus to be worried from the field, and driven from the object of his search; *but there is a fault elsewhere*. It requires a love for truth which few men possess to be willing to brave opposition, and to encounter fanaticism and intolerance for its attainment.

An attentive and candid observer of the current literature of the present age cannot fail to be struck with the fact, that the religion of Jesus Christ does not hold that place which it deserves in the affections of popular writers. In searching for a reason for this melancholy fact, will it not be apparent that it is mainly owing to the false ideas, so generally prevalent, of what religion is, and in what it consists? It is fashionable to make religion consist in a formal assent to certain inferential propositions, contained in the formulas of ecclesiastical bodies, and not in an assent to the simple truths of the Bible as each man is able to collect them for himself. Men whose minds have been liberalized by general study, and strengthened by habits of original thought, will not be thus trammelled. They plainly perceive that they can form as correct a judgment of the truths of the Bible as other men, and they claim the privilege of doing it. But, by common consent, they cannot be admitted into the Christian community till they are willing to receive certain dogmas to which the majority of the Christian world have pledged themselves. Hence, it is too often the case, that, unless religion has taken a powerful hold of their affections, they turn away in discouragement or displeasure from the whole concern.

Digitized by Google

Thus religion is made to suffer for the sad mistakes which are committed in her name.

When the public mind has been unnaturally strained in one direction, a corresponding rebound in the opposite one may always be expected. Look at Germany, and see an illustration of this general rule. Her theologians, having burst asunder the fetters in which they had been bound, have indulged themselves in such freedom of speculation, that fancy seems almost to have usurped the place of calm reason and sober judgment. This will not last. Even now the disease is working its own cure. She has the Bible, and that will gradually remove her errors, and teach her the truth. The German theologians commenced their inquiries at a time when infidelity was at work over the whole European continent—infidelity which had, naturally enough, taken the place of superstition. As I said before, they have the Bible, and if they seek, they will find. Let us never be afraid of free inquiry when the Bible is its subject and its guide.

I believe that the minds of many men are stirred upon the subject of religion as they have never been before; that the religious principle is taking firmer root in men's hearts than it has ever done before. The consequence is, that there is a general and decided movement in the Christian world. There are those, on the one hand, who are in favor of drawing tighter and closer the fetters and subjects of ecclesiastical rule and order; while, on the other hand, there are those who earnestly desire to see a perfect exhibition of religious liberty and equality, in the broadest sense of those terms. No one can

Digitized by Google

doubt this, who will attentively watch the signs of the times — the controversies and the struggles which are going on amid every sect in Christendom. I will allude, by way of illustration, to late movements among several orthodox religious bodies. See how the Episcopal church is convulsed to its very centre; how the Presbyterian church has been rent asunder; and how among the Methodists, and Baptists, and others, the same principles are at work. Look at the late movements in the American Tract Society. Its publishing committee have been publicly censured for altering the works of President Edwards to suit the altered taste of the times. The rigors of Calvinism must be softened, or it will not now be received. Those who are curious upon this subject will perhaps be interested in comparing some of the works of Edwards, as recently published by the Tract Society, with the same works as they originally came from his hands.

On the other hand, look at the spirit of rigid orthodoxy as it has recently been exhibited at the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. During the debate concerning the validity of Roman Catholic baptism, a prominent member of that body asserted, that there was not truth enough in the church of Rome to save a sinner. Did he forget the name of Fenelon? Did he never hear of the great and good Quesnel? Has the memory of Pascal ceased from a world which he enlightened and sanctified by his learning and piety? Has history never informed him of Massillon, who in the polluted atmosphere of the court of Louis XIV. kept his lamp trimmed, and was

Digitized by Google

a bright and shining light? — to whom the monarch himself confessed, "Father, when I hear other preachers, I go away much pleased with them; but whenever I hear you, I go away much displeased with myself." Has he never seen any private Christians belonging to that communion, who feared God and worked righteousness,—of whom the Scriptures declare, that, in every nation, they who do these things shall find acceptance? It would be amusing, were it not so lamentable, to see infallibility thus arrayed against infallibility.*

While then, it *may* be true that the *majority* of men are growing more thoughtless and irreligious, it appears to me that many of those who do think are thinking to some purpose,—are learning to discriminate between essentials and non-essentials. Thus are they aiding to divest the religion of Jesus Christ of those human additions—"terrene concretions," as an old writer quaintly calls them — which have hindered its spread in the world. Thus are they endeavoring to hold it up in its wondrous beauty and simplicity, before the eyes of

* President Quincy, in his "Speech on the Minority Report of Mr. Bancroft," makes an amusing remark, which will apply very well here. "When the Reformation came," says he, "and sects multiplied, the leaders of every sect realized the advantage the Romish Church possessed in *St. Peter's keys*; and, as they could not divest that church of those keys, they set themselves to work, and manufactured *little pass-keys*, as like to St Peter's as possible, and taught their converts to believe that they were quite as good, if not a little better, than the great keys of St. Peter; being made of the same material, a little lighter, not quite so burdensome, and altogether as sure.

"Now I cannot find," he goes on to say, "that the sect called Unitarian, *ever made to itself a pass-key*," &c.

Digitized by Google

an admiring multitude; and surely they will have their reward.

Ah, my dear Sir, it is all in vain *now* to claim for certain systems, the inventions of men, and sustained by human power, the same authority they had when called forth by a different state of things, in a different age of the world. The world, as it grows old, grows wise; at least, it *thinks* so; and will not consent to be under tutors and governors as in its childhood. Ignorance and superstition have fled before knowledge, and a servile spirit has given place to a spirit of liberty. This state of things has its dangers, I confess; but still the fact remains that such a state exists, and men must prepare themselves for its development.

I honestly believe that, in proportion as men are released from the tyranny of the dogmas imposed by human creeds, will pure and undefiled religion extend and flourish. Yet I do not at all wonder that sectarians, honest and pious men, who hold, as I once did, the *necessity* of believing certain tenets not explicitly taught in the word of God, should be alarmed at what seems to them the spread of infidelity. Once it seemed so to me; but over what I formerly mourned, I now rejoice. God be praised, that men are learning to take the Bible to their free hearts — to clasp it with honest independence, and hold it firmly there. God be praised, that they will allow no human authority to come between their Bibles and their hearts—their God and themselves. The moment men do this, Christianity must triumph. There is a wonderful adaptedness of the simple truths of religion to man's miseries and necessities. But, so

Digitized by Google

long as these simple truths are obscured by the traditions of men, they must, to a great degree, lose their power; and the peaceful religion of Jesus Christ will be, as it has too often been, the apple of discord among the sons and daughters of men,—the watch-word of angry contention and party strife.

I will conclude this letter with an anecdote of the celebrated Col. Lehmanowsky. When he first enlisted in the French army, as Napoleon was one day reviewing his troops, something occurred, perhaps the passing of a religious procession, which caused all the Catholics to kneel, and bow themselves to the ground. Lehmanowsky stood erect. "Why do you not kneel?" inquired Napoleon. "Sire," replied the soldier, "I cannot; I am a Protestant." "Fall back then," said the Emperor mildly, and the soldier did so. "I will watch that man," said Lehmanowsky to himself; "*he respects my conscience.*" My dear Sir, let us all respect each other's consciences.

Digitized by Google

LETTER XXX.

PAINFUL THEMES.

My dear Sir:

It gives me a great deal of pain when you say, "Henceforth our religious sympathies are to be uncongenial." There is, you assert "no middle ground, no 'Platform' on which we can meet. If Christ be God," you observe, "and you refuse to worship him as God, and to receive him as such, you reject the only way of salvation which the Gospel provides." Enough has been said upon this subject in former letters, to render it unnecessary to enlarge upon it here; but I will merely remark, that if there is to be no religious sympathy between us, the fault is yours, not mine. Knowing perfectly well your sentiments and my own, I feel that there are many chords that *can* vibrate in unison, if we will only allow them to give forth their natural sounds. Time alone will show whether I have so far lost my religious feelings as would be indicated by the result you anticipate. It is mournful to have to acknowledge that you are not the only dear friend who feels in this way. Another writes, "I feel very sad whenever I think of the past. For the future our intercourse can-

Digitized by Google

not be quite the same. I find myself considering how your change will affect you about every thing that comes up before me. I believe it to be so great a change, that it must seriously alter your views of things around and above you. But I cannot cease to love you, and to desire your love in return." At another time she writes: "I have had some bitter moments since I received your letter. I have very few friends of my younger days left. Death and life's changes have deprived me of many, and now a bitter separation must take place between spirits that have long depended upon each other for intellectual improvement and social happiness."

How very sad this is! In view of this painful state of things, when I have heard expressions of heartfelt sympathy so freely poured forth for my parents and friends, I have been inclined to ask, is there no sympathy for me? Am I not a sufferer too? Is there no one who can realize what I have lost — what I have sacrificed to what I deem the cause of Truth? In the words of a Unitarian writer, I will ask, if "the standing forth, for conscience' sake, as a mark of general obloquy, the being shunned and vilified, the bearing of hard names and cruel insinuations, the loss of reputation among the great body of the people, and the wounds of private friendship" — to me far more painful than all the rest — are nothing? *Are* all these things *nothing?* Ah, there are times, my dear Sir, when, in the agony of my feelings, I have been inclined to exclaim, in the touching language of inspiration, "All ye that pass by,

Digitized by Google

come and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow ?"

Yet all these things will not, cannot move me, nor cause me to deny what I believe to be the truth as it is in Jesus. I am serious and earnest in this matter, and well may I be so, for it is a serious business. I did not take this step without counting the cost. I well knew it would be unpopular. I had some anticipation of the contumely and reproach I should bring upon myself for presuming to differ from the majority ; I knew that my motives would be misunderstood and misrepresented ; of all this I seriously thought ; for all this I was in a measure prepared ; but I must, in candor, say, that I did not dream of the extent to which the spirit of orthodoxy would carry some of its votaries. Some of the things which I have suffered were naturally to be expected ; they will always be the lot of every one who takes any uncommon step, while the majority of persons in every community spend their time, as did the Athenians of old, " in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."

As I have said in another letter, before I began to investigate the *main* point which has now separated me from nearly all my relatives and friends, my views upon other points had become essentially modified. I can say of myself as some one has said of John Blanco White, that his mind, which had been bound by the fetters of Jesuitism, " rushed to a compromise, and compromises," remarks the author, " only last for a time." He first took refuge in the established Church of England, but his active mind cast off one fetter after

Digitized by Google

another, till finally he stood boldly forth in the ranks of liberal Christianity, and avowed himself a Unitarian. Like him, may I be cheered and sustained by this simple and scriptural faith, during the remnant of my life, and in the article of death.

Well, as I said before, the "compromise" which I had made did not last long. After a while I came to the great inquiry whether the doctrine of the Trinity was taught in the Bible. After a diligent search I found, that, to my apprehension, it was not there taught. The question I then asked myself was this, *what is my duty?* In view of all the circumstances, some of them very peculiar, of my case, what does truth, what does my own conscience, what does God require of me? In this solemn attitude, feeling intensely my responsibilities to God and to my fellow men, I have made my decision. If I am mistaken, my mistake has been, and is, an honest one. With my views of what constitutes an honest character, I could not have acted differently. In the words of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, I must say, "I was obliged to pursue this course, whatever I suffered by it, unless I would lose all inward peace, and hope of God's favor and acceptance in the end."

Thanks be to God, I am enjoying a new life. While my friends are mourning over me, I am rejoicing with a calm and holy joy which has spread itself to the inmost recesses of my soul. We are to be made perfect *through suffering*. It seems to me a mistaken idea that the Christian must wait till he dies before he can taste the blessedness of heaven. Our heaven may begin below. The *soul* may be in heaven while it

Digitized by Google

tabernacles in the flesh. In our ideas of what heaven is, there is too much of the material, and too little of the spiritual. Heaven, I take it, does not mean any particular spot in God's universe, but that *state* of the soul which fits it for the enjoyment of God. When the soul, as it often does, rises above this world, is dead to its follies, its temptations, its sins, and its sorrows, then it is in heaven. And yet, while it is joined to the flesh, it *must* be subject to the variations arising from its situation, it can only be made perfect, as the soul of our Master was, *through suffering*. Then, while we endeavor to avoid the cause of suffering — that sin which brings death — let us welcome every trial sent by our heavenly Father as a bitter, yet salutary medicine; let us meekly endure, and be thankful for, every sorrow and every pang. Then shall these painful separations be our "light afflictions," which will "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

I do not believe, my dear Sir, that my friends would feel as they do if they would only be willing to read, or to hear, with candid attention, what Unitarians have to say in their own defence. Among the great mass of the Orthodox, there is a great amount of ignorance and prejudice upon this subject. I have every reason to believe that those of my friends who have spoken most confidently against Unitarians, are as ignorant of them, and of their principles, as expressed in their writings, as I once was myself. I find, on the other hand, that those who know them best, who have been most associated with them — how much soever they may differ from them in doctrine — are most sparing of invective and denunciation.

Digitized by Google

It seems strange to me that good people should be willing to condemn their brethren without even giving them a hearing. There is a strange reluctance among the Orthodox to read the writings of Unitarian authors, and yet no man has a right to judge another merely upon hearsay. "We should imagine," says Burnap, "that all fair-minded men, who have often heard us censured, would *gladly* embrace the opportunity of hearing our defence, that by knowing the arguments upon both sides, they might have the means of making up their own judgments. Any unwillingness to do this, must arise either from a distrust of what they have already embraced as truth, or from the claim of infallibility. If a man feels a fear lest his opinions may be shaken, what is this but a confession that he already suspects they are unsound? He is already a doubter. Does he feel confident of his infallibility? Who can claim infallibility in this imperfect state? Who has so much light on any subject, that he can receive no more? 'Prove all things,' says the Apostle, 'Hold fast that which is good.'"

This unwillingness to read often arises from the fear of having one's peace of mind disturbed by the consideration of arguments which it may be difficult to overthrow. But is not this preferring peace before sound doctrine? Some persons seem to think that peace is to be preserved at the expenre of every thing else. But this was not the idea of an inspired Apostle. "*First* pure," says he, "*then* peaceable." "The peace of mankind," said Mr. Hans Stanley, when he was opposing the petition of the English clergymen for relief in

Digitized by Google

the article of subscription — "The peace of mankind is a fortieth article of my religion, which I hold to be much more important than any of the thirty-nine." There are not a few in the present day who appear to be decidedly of the opinion of Mr. Hans Stanley.

"I cannot but think," said the excellent Duke of Grafton, "that a belief in the divinity of Christ, and the invocation of him as God, is displeasing to the Almighty, as breaking his first great and unrepealed command; and that every man who *wilfully* neglects *to inquire* has much to answer for." "The lovers of truth," said Sir George Saville, "will love all sincere inquirers after it, though they may differ from them in various religious sentiments. For it is to impartial and free inquiry only that error owes its ruin and truth its success." And in another place he says, "When I see a rivulet flow to the top of a high rock, and requiring a strong engine to force it back again, then shall I think that freedom of inquiry will be prejudicial to truth."

Why then, I again earnestly inquire, is there this universal determination, among the Orthodox, not to read Unitarian books, and not to allow them to be read, so far as their influence can prevail to accomplish the object? What does it mean? Are the arguments in favor of the Unitarian, *stronger* than those in favor of the Trinitarian scheme? If they are, they deserve to be considered, surely. And if they are not, they ought not to be feared. When I hear it confidently asserted that Unitarians do not believe in regeneration, nor in the atonement, nor in a Saviour, nor in a Holy Spirit, I

Digitized by Google

have a right to demand of those who make such assertions, that they will point me to the Unitarian works where these things are denied. And I have also a right to demand that they will give their attention when I point *them* to Unitarian works where a belief in those things is expressly asserted and proved.

And now, my dear Sir, I have but little more to say. I have intended to do what is right; may God and my fellow-men forgive me if I have done what is wrong. I am firm and happy in my present opinions, but I shall always be ready to exchange them for any which may be more according to the Scriptures of truth. At this most solemn crisis of my life, human praise or censure affect me not. Let me explain myself. They are nothing, I mean, *in comparison* with the approbation or disapprobation of God and my own conscience. At the same time, I should be either *more* or *less* than human, did I not most keenly feel the severe and heart-affecting trials through which I am passing. I cannot better conclude than in the words of the late Rev. John Sherman, in an address to the youth of his congregation at Mansfield, Conn., from which he was dismissed in consequence of holding Unitarian opinions. "The subject," he says, alluding to the same subject which has been engaging our attention — "The subject is of primary importance, and demands your serious and attentive consideration. Let me exhort you to search the Scriptures diligently, and see whether they teach you that three divine persons, three distinct moral agents, make, when added together, only one individual being. Should the result of your investigation comport

Digitized by Google

with the doctrine which I have taught you from the Scriptures, I wish you may be duly impressed with the importance of openly avowing it, and appearing as its advocates ; that you will never be ashamed of the interesting truth, but boldly and faithfully stand in its defence, though the multitude should be against you. Let your zeal, however, be well tempered with Christian charity. Be moderate and candid, liberal and catholic, in your treatment of those who may differ. Above all, always remember that the best orthodoxy is a faithful observance of the sacred precepts of that One God whom you profess and acknowledge."

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX.

A.

In regard to the different senses in which the term God may be used, I have recently met with testimony, which, to some persons, may be rather new and startling. I will introduce this testimony by a short extract from a published sermon recently preached by the Rev. Dr. Gilman in the Unitarian church of Charleston, S. C. It is entitled "Unitarian Christianity no Novel Device." "Nearly a hundred years ago," says he, "the Pastor of a Baptist Church in this city, with his congregation, adopted Arian sentiments, which he publicly defended in his discourses, and explained in a printed catechism still extant, and of which a copy may be seen in the library of your speaker." In an Appendix, he says: "The Baptist Catechism, referred to in this page, is a curious document, dated Charleston, and is dedicated to Mrs. Amarantha Farr, Mrs. Francis Elliott, Mrs. Elizabeth Elliott, and Mrs. Elizabeth Williamson, all descendants, by blood or marriage, of Mr. William Elliott. The following extracts will sufficiently illustrate the assertion made in the discourse:

"'*Qu. What are we then to believe of Christ Jesus? It is commonly said we allow him to be no more than a mere man, such as ourselves.*

Digitized by Google

Ans. But this is untrue. For we confess Jesus Christ *was in the beginning* of the world, *with God and was God.* And after his Resurrection, he was made and appointed *Lord* and *God over all, the Father* only *excepted, who put all things under him.*

Qu. Whence came this Calumny?

Ans. Why hence; we say, though Jesus Christ was God above all other Beings but the Father, he was not the Most High God: but the Father only was greater than Christ, and his God and Head.

Qu. You seem to make two Gods, but the Scripture declares there are no more Gods than one?

Ans. The Scripture uses the word *God* in two different significations, *first*, to denote *the Supreme* or *Most High*, who is so called by Way of Eminence. And in this sense the Scriptures use the Word, when they assert *there is but one God:* There being but one supreme God, and no more. But at other Times, the Word God denotes any Person of Power and Authority; and so Angels, Magistrates, and Prophets, whom God invests with Authority and Power by his Commission, are called Gods, and in this sense, *there are Lords many and Gods many.*

Qu. What worship is due to Christ?

Ans. We are to give Glory to God, and offer our Prayers to God, thro' him.

Qu. May we not give Glory and Praise, and offer up prayers to him?

Ans. There are some instances of giving Glory to Christ, and some short ejaculatory Prayers offered to him; and both may be done, provided we remember we give him Glory out of Reverence to God's Command, and pray to him as God's Vicegerent, and not as the supreme God himself; but the praising and praying to God thro' him,

Digitized by Google

is both the most common and exact form of Worship, and least liable to Mistakes.

Qu. What other Worship is due to Him?

Ans. We ought to be baptized in his Name, and to commemorate his Sufferings in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Qu. Can we be guilty of Idolatry in worshipping Jesus Christ?

Ans. Yes, the Majority of Christians are guilty of it, by giving him the Worship proper to the Father alone: They exceed the Limit of God's Command in this Particular, whereby Jesus Christ, who came to abolish Idolatry, is made the greatest Idol in the World.'"

B.

This passage, "he called them Gods, to whom the word of God came," appears to me to throw great light upon that much contested passage which forms the proem to St. John's Gospel. St. John seems to have been writing against those who believed as did Philo, the Jewish Plato, and the Alexandrian Jews, that the Logos was an emanation from the Deity, and a different person from God himself. He tells them that the Word or Wisdom, or Reason of God, as it is called by most of the Greek Fathers, — that this Word, or Wisdom, or Reason which created all things, and in which was Life, and which was manifested in the flesh, or was "made flesh" — was, as the acute philosopher Thomas Brown expresses it, "not any

Digitized by Google

thing different from God himself." Now this "Word" came to Christ, in an especial manner, through him God manifested himself to the world as he never had done before. But if those were called Gods to whom the word of God came, then, *in this sense*, Christ can be called a God. Le Clerc, who was a Trinitarian, does not apply the first verse of John's Gospel to the second person in the Trinity, but says, "The meaning of the Evangelist is, that philosophers spoke agreeably to truth when they said, that, at the beginning of the world, there was Reason, or Divine Intelligence, which had created all things."

Some Trinitarians think that the phrase "the Word" was used by John to denote the Messiah, because it was thus used in the Chaldee paraphrases or Targums, but other learned Trinitarians think there is no foundation for such a supposition. Michaelis says, "Though they (the Rabbins) frequently used the expression 'the word of God,' especially in their Targums or paraphrases, they did not mean to express a separate and distinct being from Jehovah himself, or, as we should say, the second person of the Trinity." Introd. to the New Test. vol. iii. pp. 280, 281. Dr. Burton says, "It has been proved satisfactorily that Memra, (or, the Word,) is never used in the Targums for a distinct and separate person; it is, in fact, only another form for the pronoun *himself*." Theol. Works. vol. iii. Bampt. Lect. pp. 221, 222. It appears clear to me that John was teaching only that the Logos, which was manifested to the world, *through Christ*, was God *himself*. And John keeps up this idea through the passage. "All things were made by *it*," &c., for Dr. Campbell says, "every version which preceded it, (that is, the common translation,) as far as I have been able to discover, uniformly employed the neuter pronoun *it*. Mitford, like-

Digitized by Google

wise a Trinitarian, says, "'The original (nor is the observation new) would equally bear the version 'all things were made through it,'" &c. We learn that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made," "he *spake* and it was done."

C.

The following are the remarks of Trinitarian writers concerning the passage, "Thy throne, O God, &c." as it occurs in the Psalms, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. They are taken from a remarkable volume entitled, "The Concessions of Trinitarians;" from which volume I have elsewhere quoted largely. Of the verse, as it occurs in the 45th Psalm, the following interpretations are given:

"Thy throne may God establish forever."—Dr. Geddes.

"Thy throne, O divine Prince! is forever and ever." Mudge.

"Thy throne, O Solomon! by the blessing of God, is to last for many generations."—Dr. Wells.

Calmet says, the Hebrew word, here translated God, "designates the rank of a judge and sovereign; as if the Psalmist in connecting it with that of the throne of the Messiah, meant to say, that Jesus should be appointed by his Father the judge of the living and the dead, possess the throne of David, his ancestor, and reign over the true Israel during all eternity." Limborch says, the title *God*, "is attributed to Solomon, by reason of his regal dignity, which was supreme in Israel, and in the same sense as

Digitized by Google

kings and magistrates are called *gods* and *children of the Most High*. Ps. lxxxii. 6. But in a more sublime sense it is spoken of Christ, the antitype of Solomon, on account of his kingly dignity, by which he had all power in heaven and in earth, all things being subject unto him, except He alone who put all things under him."

The remarks which follow are upon the same text as it occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Wiclif* renders it, "God thy throne is into the world of world." *Tyndal*, "God thy seat shall be forever and ever." *Griesbach*, "God (is) thy throne forever and ever." A writer in the Biblical Repository for Jan. 1839, says, "Here the Son is addressed by the title *God;* but the context shows it is an official title, which designates him as a king; he has a kingdom, a throne, a sceptre; and in verse 9, he is compared with other kings, who are called his fellows; *but God can have no fellows.* As the Son, therefore, he is classed *with the kings of the earth;* and his superiority over them consists in this, that he is anointed with the oil of gladness above them, inasmuch as their thrones are temporary, but his shall be everlasting." See *Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 166, 167, 529, 530.

D.

I copy from the *Concessions of Trinitarians*, the following remarks upon this passage, abridged from Erasmus. "This passage may be pointed and rendered in three different ways: *First*, 'Of whom, according to the flesh, is

Digitized by Google

Christ, who is over all. God be blessed forever.' *Second*, 'Of whom, according to the flesh, is Christ, who, being God over all, is blessed forever.' And, *third*, which is perfectly suitable to the purport of the discourse, 'Of whom is Christ according to the flesh,' finishing the sentence here, and subjoining what follows — 'God, who is over all, be blessed forever,'— as an ascription of praise for our having received the law, the covenant, and the prophecies, and lastly, Christ sent in human nature; privileges which God, by his unspeakable counsels, had bestowed for the redemption of mankind. And here, if the word *God* be understood to mean the whole Sacred Trinity, (as is frequently done in Scripture, where, for example, we are commanded to worship God, and to serve him only,) then will Christ not be excluded; but, if it be explained to denote the person of the Father, (which is a common signification of the term *God*, as used by St. Paul, when Christ or the Spirit is mentioned in conjunction,) then, though clear as noon-day that, in other places, Christ, as well as the Father and the Holy Ghost, is called truly God, this passage will not be valid to confute the Arians; there being nothing whatever to prevent its application to the Father. Those, therefore, who contend that in this text Christ is clearly termed *God*, either place little confidence in other passages of Scripture,— deny all understanding to the Arians,— or pay scarcely any attention to the style of the Apostle. A similar passage occurs in 2 Cor. xi. 31: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who is blessed forever*;' the latter clause being undeniably restricted to the Father. If, however, the church teaches that Rom. ix. 5, must be interpreted of the deity of the Son, the church must be obeyed; though this is not sufficient to convince heretics, or those who will listen only

Digitized by Google

to the words of Sacred Writ; but, if she were to say, that that passage cannot be otherwise explained in conformity with the Greek, she would assert what is confuted by the thing itself."

Vater says, that the passage we are considering "is a parenthesis and a doxology, which refers either to *Christ*, the nearest antecedent, or to God the Father, but to which it is scarcely possible to determine. The words ὁ ων ευλογ cannot be construed as in 2 Cor. xi. 31; for the verb *be* must, in Rom. ix. 5, be supplied. Those words may, indeed, be easily connected with the preceding; but Paul could begin a new proposition with the same expression, ὁ ων, as in John iii. 31; viii. 47. On the other hand, since the words ὁ επι παντων Θεος are elsewhere said only of God the Father, is it not what is termed a *petitio principii* to assert that they are here applied to the Messiah?"

Wilson, the compiler of the book from which the foregoing extracts have been taken, goes on to remark: "Without taking into account the conjectural criticism by which some Unitarians would alter the reading ὁ ων into ὡν ὁ, '*of whom*, or *whose*, is the God over all,' &c., in accordance with a principle which, ERNESTI says, is 'not to be entirely neglected,' though he does not apply it to Rom. ix. 5; — and without also placing undue stress on the fact, that not a little doubt existed in the minds of ERASMUS, GROTIUS, and others, as to the propriety of retaining the word *God*, which seems to have been omitted in manuscripts used by some of the Fathers; it may be remarked, that the quotations here made from many of the most acute critics in the "orthodox" body, forbid any reliance on the passage as a *proof* that Christ is Almighty God. For it is admitted, that the punctuation may be changed; that the latter clause of the original, either

Digitized by Google

after σαρκα or παντων, may be rendered as a doxology to the Father; — that, even according to those modes of pointing and translating which appear most favorable to Trinitarian theology, Christ is not called *the Supreme* Gód, but Lord over all, in his human nature; — and that he may be termed *God over all*, as being merely the God of the Jews and Gentiles, in the lower sense of the word; the Mediator, the Head of the church, and the Judge of the world, by the Father's appointment. Similar to these are the renderings and expositions which have proceeded from the lips and pens of *Unitarians*, but which have subjected them to the opprobrious names of mere sciolists and God-deniers!"—*Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 424–427.

E.

"Above all, it is worthy of remark, that, as humility and obedience are here the subject of discourse, we ought to understand what St. Paul says, *of Christ's humanity*; for his divine nature, being the same as that of the Father, is not susceptible of humility and obedience. These are excellencies, not of the Creator, but of created beings. — Le Clerc: *Le Nouv. Test.*

"*Though he was in a divine form.*—Luther. *Though he was like God, and was his image.* — J. D. Michaelis. *Though he was the visible image of God.* — Seiler. *Though he had it in his power to be in the lofty station of God.* — Storr.

Digitized by Google

"The *form of God* here signifies majesty. . . . I acknowledge, indeed, that Paul does not make mention of Christ's divine essence. — CALVIN.

"From this place, indeed, the Fathers used to prove the Divinity of Christ; but *the form of God* is not God himself. — JAS HEERBRAND.

"*Thought it not robbery to be as God.* — DODDRIDGE and WYNNE. *Did not think it robbery to be like God.* — MACKNIGHT.

"*Did not covet to appear as God.* — DR. WHITBY. *Was not fond, or tenacious, of appearing as God; did not eagerly insist to be equal with God.* — BISHOP SHERLOCK.

"*Was not tenacious of this equality with God, did not consider it as a thing to be eagerly grasped.*—PRINCIPAL HILL. *Did not think equality with God a thing to be seized with violence.* — S. T. COLERIDGE. *He regarded not the being equal with God as a thing to be eagerly coveted.* — PROFESSOR STUART. *Did not esteem it an object to be caught at to be on a parity with God.* — DR. J. P. SMITH.

"The Apostle," says Erasmus, "speaks of Christ as man. He did not usurp to himself equality with God, but 'humbled himself.' What is here rendered, *He did not think it robbery, &c.* AMBROSE explains, '*He did not assert, or arrogate to himself, equality with God;* so that he might show us an example of humility; but *subjected himself*, that he might be exalted by the Father.' But what excellence did Paul attribute to Christ, by saying, that, though God by nature, he thought it not robbery — that is, knew himself to be God? Now, it is certain that never is greater violence done to the Holy Scriptures, than when, in contending with heretics, we

Digitized by Google

wrest everything for the sake of victory. Yet I cannot see with what propriety this text makes against the Arians, who deny not that Christ is a God, and acknowledge him to be even a great God, blessed forever; but who believe that the Father is called God, in a manner peculiarly distinguished above the Son and the Holy Spirit. St. Paul does not here treat of what Christ was, but how he acted, namely, by giving to us an example. He was both God and man; but he concealed his divinity, whilst he exhibited his human nature to the very tomb; for even others have been eminent for the miracles which they performed; and if incidentally he did throw out scintillations of his divine nature, he referred them at all times to the Father, and arrogated nothing to himself. The whole passage, therefore, seems to me to be most violently misapplied to the nature of Christ; since Paul is treating only of his appearance as manifested to us." *Annot. in Op.* tom. vi. pp. 867, 868.

In regard to this passage, Professor Stuart says, "Our common version seems to render nugatory, or at least irrelevant, a part of the Apostle's reasoning in this passage. He is enforcing the principle of Christian humility upon the Philippians..... But how was it any proof or example of humility, that *he did not think it robbery to be equal with God?*" *Ans. to Channing*, Let. iii. II. p. 84.

The above extracts are taken from the *Concessions of Trinitarians*, pp. 476 – 480.

Digitized by Google

F.

"Our author takes for granted," says Pitkin, "what is by no means admitted, that Jesus in calling himself the root of David meant that he was the 'source of David's being.' In several instances in the Sacred Scriptures, he is spoken of under the figure of a ROOT, but no where, we believe, in connexions which should induce us to regard him as the prime source of all being. In Isa. liii. 2, he is spoken of as 'a ROOT out of a dry ground,' and the same prophet, as quoted by Paul, Rom. xv. 12, says in respect to him, 'There *shall be* a ROOT of Jesse, and he shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.' Here it is declared, that '*there shall be* a root of Jesse,' not that *there was* from all eternity a root from which Jesse was to spring, *the source of Jesse's being.* No, the evident meaning is, that from the seed of Jesse there shall be a root, which root is Christ, in whom the Gentiles were to trust. So the obvious meaning of the declaration of our Lord, 'I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star,' appears to be this; that as a lineal descendant, in a legal point of view, from the seed of David, he was his *offspring*, and that in his official capacity as the Messiah, he became the ROOT of the choicest hopes and expectations of David, and of the chief glory of his house and people. In a like sense many a child has been exalted to official stations, which rendered him his father's lord, and a fruitful root of his prosperity and honor." From Pitkin's Reply to Baker, as reprinted in Charleston, 1843, pp. 63, 64.

Digitized by Google

G.

The extracts which follow are from the *Concessions of Trinitarians*, p. 579.

"A great lord is termed *Lord of lords*, because he possesses authority over many other Lords. The title *King of kings* is used of him who rules over a number of kings; and was formerly employed of the sovereigns of Persia, Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt." — DRUSIUS.

"*King of kings*, or God's vicegerent over the whole earth; a title belonging to him alone whom God hath anointed *his king*, Ps. ii. 2, 6." — PYLE. (Similarly interpreted by Grotius and the Assembly's Annotator.)

"On account of his exaltation to heaven, at the right hand of God the Father, Jesus is called the King of kings and Lord of lords. — LIMBORCH: *Theol. Christ.* lib. ii. cap. 2, § 16. (To the same purport, Archbishop SECKER, Lect. vii. vol. i. pp. 102, 103.)

"Even as man, Christ is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." — CALMET on chap. xix. 16.

"*King of kings*, according to the style of the oriental languages, answers to *great*, as if it was *the great king*, which was the style of the Greeks when they spoke of the Persian monarchy. But such reduplications were not so proper to the oriental style, but that, to show the excellency of any thing, the Greeks and Romans used them too; of which many instances might be given out of the best authors." — DAUBUZ on chap. xix. 16.

Digitized by Google

H.

"No text of the New Testament has been more frequently cited, perhaps, in proof of the Trinity, than the last verse of Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians. It is a benediction. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the participation of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.' Here, it is said, are the three persons of the Trinity, brought together, made equal, and more than this, made the objects of worship. But all appearance of intimating such a doctrine, is instantly dissipated by a consideration, which seems to have been strangely overlooked. The second person of this Trinity is *God*, the whole Deity, without any distinction of persons. 'The love of *God*.' So far then from supporting the doctrine of the Trinity, this passage contains a strong argument against it. Divinity is by implication *denied* to Christ, for he is spoken of in connexion with God, but as distinct from him. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *and* the love of God.' There is no intimation that these two persons are one being, or that they are both God, or constitute one God. One is God, in the most unlimited sense, *comprehending* the three persons, if the word God ever can be supposed to do so. The other is the Lord Jesus Christ, connected with God by the particle *and*, proving, if any thing can prove, that the Lord Jesus Christ is *out* of the Deity, and not *in* it.

"In the last clause the word 'fellowship' serves to mystify this passage. In common language, this word is nearly synonymous with the word 'companionship,' and would seem to intimate that the Apostle wished the early Christians the companionship of the Holy Spirit. But

Digitized by Google

the English word, which comes nearest to it, is 'participation.' We have fellowship *with* a person, but participation *in* a thing. It is only by a figure of speech, that we can participate in a person. We participate in a thing without a figure. The meaning, therefore, evidently is, 'May you be partakers of the Holy Spirit.'

"The phrase, 'the Holy Spirit,' so far from indicating a person, is in the original in the neuter gender, signifying that it is not a person, but a thing. There are doubts then, suggested by the very language, not only whether the Holy Spirit be a Person of the Trinity, but whether it be a person at all. Those doubts are much strengthened, when we compare such parallel passages as these; 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.' The same writer expresses the same meaning in another place; 'I send the promise of my Father upon you — ye shall be endued with *power from on high.*' To be baptized with a person, hardly makes sense. Besides, what is called the 'Holy Ghost,' in one passage, is evidently called 'power from on high' in the other. Power from on high is evidently not a person."—*Burnap's Expository Lectures*, pp. 13 15.

I.

It is a frequent complaint of Trinitarians against Unitarians, that they love to bring forward great names in support of their system. It is certainly very pleasant to find ourselves in good company; yet if all the great men

Digitized by Google

in the world had embraced a certain opinion, however such a circumstance might add weight and dignity to that opinion, it would be no *certain* evidence of its truth. But when Trinitarians stoutly deny what Unitarians believe to be a fact, it becomes the duty of the latter to give the reasons for their belief of the fact. In regard to the religious opinions of Sir Isaac Newton, I will make a few extracts from *Sparks's Inquiry*. "Sir Isaac Newton," says he, "was one of the first, who formally engaged in proving the spuriousness of the famous text of the three heavenly witnesses, 1 John, v. 7; and also in showing that the received reading of 1 Tim. iii. 16, is a corruption. This subject was discussed in two letters said to have been written to Le Clerc. The language and arguments are precisely such as would be used by Unitarians, and such as Trinitarians of that day, before the controversy touching those passages had been much agitated, could not be supposed to have employed. In adverting to the testimony of Cyprian, Newton observes, that 'he does not say, the Father, the *Word*, and the Holy Ghost, as in 1 John v. 7, but the Father, the *Son*, and the Holy Ghost, as it is in Baptism, *the place from which they at first* TRIED *to derive the Trinity.*' Do you believe," inquires Mr. Sparks, "this language ever escaped from a Trinitarian? Instead of indicating any confidence in the doctrine of the Trinity, does it not strongly imply that the advocates of this doctrine have TRIED in vain to find it in a text, to which they have universally resorted as a strong hold? The person who can read these Letters with an unshaken conviction that the author was not an anti-trinitarian, must have a rule of deciding the meaning of a writer from his language, which few will apprehend. It is known, that Erasmus received the text of the three

Digitized by Google

witnesses into his Testament on the authority of a single manuscript in England. He doubted the value of this manuscript, and wrote much against it. Newton says, that his adversaries in England never answered his accusations, 'but, on the contrary, *when they had got the Trinity into his edition*, they threw by their manuscript, *if they had one*, as an almanac out of date.' It may be doubted," Mr. Sparks quaintly observes, "whether a Trinitarian would thus have spoken."

"When Sir Isaac Newton was Master of the Mint, the office of Assay Master was filled by Mr. Hopton Haynes. This gentleman was a Unitarian, and wrote with much ability and learning a treatise on the subject, which has recently been several times republished.* Mr. Haynes, who was long and intimately acquainted with Newton, declared to a friend,† that 'he did not believe our Lord's pre-existence, being a Socinian, as we call it, in that article; and that Sir Isaac much lamented Dr. Clarke's embracing Arianism, which opinion he feared had been, and still would be, if maintained by learned men, a great obstruction to the progress of Christianity.' There is yet another argument directly in point, and in my mind an unanswerable one. It is well known, that Newton left several papers on theological subjects, which have never been permitted to come before the world. They were cautiously excluded from Horsley's large edition of his works. These papers have been said to contain more at large the author's views of the Unitarian system; nor has

* This work is called a *Scripture Account of the Attributes and Worship of God, and of the character and Offices of Jesus Christ.*

† The Rev. Richard Baron, "a person of great probity and public spirit, and known by many valuable publications."

Digitized by Google

this report been contradicted by the persons who hold the papers in their possession. It was not contradicted by Horsley, who examined the papers, and declared them unsuitable for publication. What could Horsley find in any theological writings of Sir Isaac Newton, which he deemed proper to keep in the dark? This question has been answered in conformity with the common sense of mankind, by a writer, who cannot be supposed to have spoken from interested motives. 'Newton's religious opinions were not orthodox. For example, he did not believe in the Trinity. This gives us the reason why Horsley, the champion of the Trinity, found Newton's papers unfit for publication. But it is much to be regretted, that they have never seen the light.'* I will only add, that Dr. Chalmers has confessed his belief in the Unitarian sentiments of Newton — awkwardly enough, to be sure, but still it is a confession — and this, after making him not only the greatest and wisest philosopher, but the acutest and profoundest *theologian*, whom the world has seen." †—*Sparks's Inquiry*, pp. 367 – 374.

Speaking of Unitarian tenets Lord Jeffrey said, "to which there is reason to believe neither Milton nor Newton were disinclined."—*Concessions of Trinitarians*, p. 6.

* Thomson's *History of the Royal Society*, p. 283; *Annals of Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 322; as quoted by Mardon.

† Compare the *Preface to Dr. Chalmer's Discourses* with the second sermon in the course. See likewise *Unitarian Miscellany*, vol. i. p. 167.

For further information respecting the sentiments of Newton, consult Mardon's *Letter to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers;* and *Carpenter's Examination of Magee's Charges against Unitarians and Unitarianism*, p. 102.

Digitized by Google

K.

If I am in error, my error has cost me dear. In proclaiming my adherence to another faith than that in which I was educated, I have had very little to gain, and a vast deal — almost every thing — to lose. The excellent John Hales, in his Letter to Archbishop Laud, has some remarks which so exactly suit my views, that I cannot forbear quoting them. "If they be errors which I have here vented," says he, "as perchance they are, yet my will hath no part in them, and they are but the issues of unfortunate inquiry. Galen, that great physician, speaks thus of himself, 'I know not how,' says that worthy person, 'even from my youth up, in a wonderful manner, whether by divine inspiration, or by fury and possession, or whatever you may please to style it, I have much contemned the opinion of the many; but truth and knowledge, I have above measure affected, verily persuading myself, that a fairer, more divine fortune could never befal a man.' Some title, some claim," says Hales, "I may justly lay to the words of this excellent person; for the pursuit of truth has been my only care; ever since I first understood the meaning of the word. For this, I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires, which might bias me, and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this, I have spent my money, my means, my youth, my age, and all I have; that I might remove from myself that censure of Tertullian, — *Suo vitio quis quid ignorat?* If, with all this cost and pains, my purchase is but error, I may safely say, to err hath cost me more, than it has many to find the truth; and truth itself shall give me this testimony, that if I have missed of her, it is not my fault, but my misfortune."

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

' it ' consists in not
is the fact, that
in doctrines
With equal
ıh be said to
ole of this school
' l larger divisions
ıory survey of what
e assertion is correct,
racter in respect to its

. the existence of a God; a
— a pure Spirit — the Author,
f the Universe — the spring of
ve in a moral government of the
intelligent creatures are made sub-
ıntable laws. We believe in a right-
· within which all things are included.
he moral nature of man; in his freedom
· capacity of improvement, and his liability
· believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ;
racles, his perfect character, his authoritative
., his voluntary death, and his triumphant resur-
ı. We believe in the necessity of obedience to the
f God, and of repentance for sin; and in the insep-
ble connexion between goodness and happiness on the
one hand, and wickedness and misery on the other. We
believe in the immortality and accountableness of man;
in spiritual judgment and future retribution. We believe
in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in respect
both to faith and to practice. We believe in the forgive-
ness of sins, in the efficacy of prayer, and in the impor-
tance of a deep and permanent change in them who lead

Digitized by Google

L.

In regard to the high tone of morality among Unitarians, Bishop Burnet says, "I must also do this right to the Unitarians as to own, that their rules in morality are exact and severe; that they are generally men of probity, justice, and charity, and seem to be very much in earnest in pressing the obligations to very high degrees in virtue." — Bishop Burnet; *apud Field's letters*, p. 26. See also life of Burnet, prefixed to the "History of His Own Time," vol. i. pp. 8, 9. Lond. 1818.

Dr. Adams says, "with regard to their moral code, the principles of the Unitarians do not seem to admit of their loosening, in the least, the bonds of duty; on the contrary, they appear to be actuated by an earnest desire to promote *practical religion*. Love is, with them, the fulfilling of the law; and the habitual practice of virtue, *from a principle of love to God, and benevolence to man*, is, in their judgment, the sum and substance of Christianity."—*Religious World Displayed; apud Field's letters*, p. 25.

The above testimonies are taken from "Concessions of Trinitarians," p. 4.

M.

"The meaning of this charge," says Dr. Gannett, namely, that Unitarianism is a negative system, "may be that our faith embraces few positive or affirmative propositions. This is doubtless the sense in which we should take the remark, that 'it is a system of negations.' It has been

Digitized by Google

said, with an attempt at smartness, that it 'consists in not believing.' The ground of this assertion is the fact, that the Unitarian Christian does not receive certain doctrines of the Calvinistic or Orthodox theology. With equal reason therefore might the Calvinistic faith be said to consist in not believing, because the disciple of this school rejects the peculiar dogmas of other still larger divisions of the Christian Church. A cursory survey of what we do believe, may show how far the assertion is correct, that our faith is of a negative character in respect to its doctrines.

"We do then believe in the existence of a God; a Being of infinite perfection — a pure Spirit — the Author, Sovereign, and Father of the Universe — the spring of peace and joy. We believe in a moral government of the universe; by which all intelligent creatures are made subject to wise and immutable laws. We believe in a righteous providence; within which all things are included. We believe in the moral nature of man; in his freedom of choice, his capacity of improvement, and his liability to err. We believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ; in his miracles, his perfect character, his authoritative teaching, his voluntary death, and his triumphant resurrection. We believe in the necessity of obedience to the will of God, and of repentance for sin; and in the inseparable connexion between goodness and happiness on the one hand, and wickedness and misery on the other. We believe in the immortality and accountableness of man; in spiritual judgment and future retribution. We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in respect both to faith and to practice. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, in the efficacy of prayer, and in the importance of a deep and permanent change in them who lead

Digitized by Google

vicious or careless lives. To sum up all in one line, we believe in God, in Christ, in duty here, and in recompense hereafter.

"Now if this exposition of our belief does not contain enough which is affirmative or positive in its character, it would be useless to collect any further evidence to the same effect. We are neither atheists nor infidels. We disbelieve a great deal that has been believed; and we thank God that we have escaped the contagion of many errors which have prevailed in the world. But we also believe a great deal; nothing which is unintelligible or contradictory to sound reason, but much which reason alone would not have taught us. What we do believe, we find in the Bible. What we find in the Bible, as a revelation from God, we believe."—*Christian Unitarianism not a negative system.* Tract No. 94, 1st series. pp. 4, 5, 6.

N.

It is very clear that many of the harsh features of the Calvinistic system have been softened down — some of its absurdities abandoned, and a milder and more rational faith substituted — chiefly through the influence, as I confidently believe, of Unitarianism. Where is the clergyman of the present day who dares preach the doctrine of the damnation of infants? And how few are there among those who call themselves Orthodox, who now venture to preach the doctrines of absolute and unconditional election and reprobation?

Digitized by Google

O.

Some remarks which I have met with in the Christian Examiner for September and October, 1826, are appropriate, and will give additional illustration to my meaning. The writer is asserting that the Calvinistic doctrine of atonement is essentially opposed to the glorious and perfect character of God; and he says, "Here, perhaps, it will be said, that I have only marshalled in array the *natural* sentiments of an evil and shortsighted man, against what is said of an infinite Being, whose designs are too vast for him to comprehend, and therefore such as he is not to sit in judgment upon, by his notions of what is right, or his notions of what is wrong. But to this it may be replied, as has often been replied before now, that it is one thing, and a very presumptuous thing, for unassisted reason to say what God will do; but quite another, and a very allowable thing, to say what he does not do, and never will.* But since I believe all his communications to mankind have had respect *to the measure of their capacities*, and that he will never, by his conduct, shock the moral feelings, or *contradict the natural judgments of men*, I am not anxious to repel this charge. Nay, more; as I also believe the doctrine in question has the support of no such authority as its supporters plead, I am not only not anxious to repel it, but conceive the fact its full admission establishes, affords a ground to stand on with an advantage not readily to be yielded. For, if *these natural sen-*

* For instance; it would be presumptuous indeed to make out a series of propositions, and say, that the Deity intended at some future day to adopt them as the rules of his government; but the humblest need not hesitate to say, that he does not act the tyrant, and never will.

Digitized by Google

timents do revolt against it, there rises a clear and unquestionable right to demand, that the opinion in question be shown to have for its evidence, the clear, explicit, and not to be mistaken language of those writings in which alone I acknowledge any authority over my faith. But in these there is nothing which compels me to think God is anything like the unmerciful being this doctrine would make him. On the contrary, it appears in strong lines of light, from Moses to St. John, that he requires only repentance, nothing but repentance,* to remove the punishment of sin, and restore offenders to his favor.—"

"— Though we are finite, and cannot perceive all relations, the marks of benevolent design so prevail in all we do perceive, that no mind can reasonably doubt that the whole constitution of things, the course of providence, nay, the ministering of every accident, tends to the shaping, and finishing of GOOD. And it is hence *reason* perceives, when an Apostle said, 'God is Love,' with how much truth he spoke."

P.

In the commencement of the year 1839, several of the orthodox clergymen of Liverpool felt themselves called upon to preach a course of sermons against the dangerous and deadly errors of Unitarians. They accordingly gave an affectionate invitation "To those who called themselves Unitarians in the town and neighborhood of Liver-

* The word repentance is used in its most comprehensive sense, denoting both sorrow for sin, and reformation of life.

Digitized by Google

pool," to attend the proposed course of lectures. The Unitarian clergymen, rejoiced at what they considered an opportunity for a candid and fair discussion of both sides of the question, wrote to the orthodox clergy, and proposed several methods by which they "might contribute their portion of truth and argument towards the correction of public sentiment on the great questions at issue between them." "Deeply aware," said they, "of our human liability to form and to convey false impressions of views and systems from which we dissent, we shall be anxious to pay a calm and respectful attention to your defence of the doctrines of your church. We will give notice of your lectures, as they succeed each other, to our congregations, and exhort them to hear you in the spirit of Christian justice and affection, presuming that, in a like spirit, you will recommend your hearers to listen to such reply as we may think it right to offer."

It seems to me that all persons must pronounce such a proposition perfectly fair, and such an expectation perfectly natural. But the very clergyman who had made the call upon the *Unitarians* of the town and neighborhood of Liverpool to hear what he had to say, answered thus to the proposition. "I am compelled to reply in the *negative*. Were I to consent to this proposal, I should thereby admit that we stood on the terms of a *religious equality*, which is, *in limine*, denied. Being unable, (you will excuse my necessary plainness of speech,) to recognize you as *Christians*, I cannot consent to meet you in a way which would imply that we occupy the same *religious* level. To *you*, there will be no sacrifice of principle or compromise of feeling, in entering our churches; to *us*, there would be such a surrender of both in entering yours, as would peremptorily prohibit any such engagement."

Digitized by Google

This singular refusal was replied to in mild, yet sufficiently spirited language. I should like to quote passages from various parts of the preliminary correspondence, but must forbear. It may be found in the volume entitled *Unitarianism Defended*, published at Liverpool in 1839. I have quoted the foregoing extracts to show the unwillingness of some of the orthodox clergy to countenance fair and honest investigation. I could mention many other instances where the same spirit has been manifested, and many orthodox theological works in which people are advised not to listen to the arguments of Unitarians, nor to read their books; but not having them at present by me, I cannot tell the exact places where such advice is to be found.

Q.

In looking over an old number of the Christian Examiner for 1826, I have met with a case in point, to show how impossible it is for an honest mind to pursue the course you recommend, and keep concealed what he is aware would cause his expulsion from an Orthodox church, if it were known. A physician in the State of Georgia, who in early life had given some attention to the subject without having obtained very definite views, connected himself finally with the Methodist Church. The cause of his avowal of Unitarian sentiments is thus stated. "In all this time," he says, "I had arrived at no definite conclusion in regard to the Trinity, but considered it one of those obscure points, which, having no reference to prac-

Digitized by Google

tice, *might be allowed to remain undisturbed.* My opinions were rather favorable to the deity of the Saviour than otherwise. I continued in this state for nearly two years, when an observation made by Mr. C. in his sermon aroused me from my state of indifference. He said that Unitarians no more deserved the name of Christians, than infidels." A remark exactly tantamount to the one contained in the letter under consideration. "This remark," the writer goes on to say, "the first of such a kind that I had heard, except from Mr. W. of Philadelphia, induced me to think that I ought to state explicitly to Mr. C. my own doubts, that he might adopt such measures with regard to me as he thought proper. This I accordingly did, almost immediately after the meeting was dissolved. I told him that I could not say I believed Jesus Christ to be God, equal to the Father, though I could not deny it; that the evidence of Scripture upon that point was not clear to my mind; that hitherto I had considered its determination a matter of but little moment, since the wisest men had differed in opinion upon it, and assured him that I knew many Unitarians who were as eminent for piety and learning as any with whom I was acquainted. After some conversation, which failed to convince me, he cited me to appear before a select number of the church, with a view to my expulsion, solely in consequence of what he considered my erroneous opinions.

"At the commencement of the meeting convened for that purpose, I presented to Mr. C. the first hymn of the West Boston Society, beginning with

> 'All-seeing God, 'tis thine to know
> The springs whence wrong opinions flow,' &c.

remarking that I hoped he would not consider it irrelevant

Digitized by Google

to the occasion to sing that hymn. It was done. After the prayer I inquired with great seriousness, whether, at the time the citation was issued, he thought I believed the Bible. He replied, that he had no reason to think otherwise, or in words tantamount. I assured them that I believed it most firmly, but that I could not accept the interpretation which men, *fallible as myself*, gave of it, if it did not coincide with my own reason, because that would, virtually, be to place my faith in the opinions of men, rather than on the word of God. I explained the origin of the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, and told them that I assented to the Apostolic in great part, and intimated the absurdity of requiring assent to a creed originating in an era of so much mental debasement as the Athanasian. I adduced passages from Scripture to prove the inferiority of Christ to the Father; that he was not omniscient, nor omnipresent. I then stated the awkwardness of the predicament in which they were about to place themselves by expelling from the church one who thus believed, and whose moral conduct had not been in the slightest degree impeached; quoted that article in the 'Discipline' which declares the 'Holy Scriptures to contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation;' told them, that if there were any defect in my mental powers, which incapacitated me from seeing the proof of the contested doctrines, they were not proved to me, and therefore, by that article, were not required to be believed.

"The result was as I anticipated. They expelled from a church professedly Christian, *one who believed Jesus*

Digitized by Google

Christ to be the Messiah, and whose moral conduct was confessedly without the shadow of a suspicion, solely because he could not do what was as impossible as to move the sun from the firmanent; viz., believe what appeared unsupported by Scripture, and contrary to reason."

I will close this note with a fact mentioned by the writer of the above quotations, because it shows how little is gained, and how much is lost by those who employ denunciation instead of argument, and hard words instead of solid reasons. "Until the recent denunciations," he says, "of Mr. C., nothing was known, I presume, of the opinions of Unitarians, by the generality of the people. The cause of rational Christianity is unquestionably promoted by the anathemas which are fulminated by the Orthodox. A spirit of inquiry is awakened, which would otherwise have lain dormant, and which must produce a favorable result ultimately."

This is perfectly in accordance with my opinion on the subject. This "spirit of inquiry," of which the Georgia physician speaks, is all that we ask for—all that we want. Give but a free and proper scope to that spirit, and the interests of liberal, rational Christianity must be speedily and universally advanced.

R.

I rejoice to know that there are some Trinitarians who are not willing thus to shut their Unitarian brethren out of Heaven. Bishop Watson says: "If different men, in carefully and conscientiously examining the Scriptures, should arrive at different conclusions, even on points of the last importance, we trust that God, who alone knows

Digitized by Google

what every man is capable of, will be merciful to him that is in error. We trust that he will pardon *the Unitarian*, if he be in an error, because he has fallen into it from the dread of becoming an Idolator,—of giving that glory to another which he conceives to be due to God alone. If the worshipper of Jesus Christ be in an error, we trust that God will pardon his mistake, because he has fallen into it from a dread of disobeying what he conceives to be revealed concerning the nature of the Son, or commanded concerning the honor to be given to him. *Both are actuated by the same principle—the fear of God;* and though that principle impels them into different roads, it is our hope and belief, that, *if they add to their faith charity*, they will meet in heaven." —Theol. Tracts, vol. i. pp. xvii, xviii.

S.

I have recently been very much struck with the singularly belligerent tone of the popular orthodoxy phraseology. It seems to me that Christians are assuming an attitude far too warlike for those who profess to be the meek and lowly followers of the "Prince of Peace." Most of the orthodox presses teem with articles calculated to fire the imagination and fill it with pictures of bannered hosts, and armies marching to battle. The Editor of the Christian Register, in a recent number giving an account of an anniversary meeting of the 'Christian Alliance,' held at Boston, thus writes: "We must be permitted again to express our surprise that eminent Christian teachers, who we know deprecate war from their inmost souls, should allow themselves to indulge in a manner of speaking,

Digitized by Google

which cannot fail to kindle its spirit in the hearts of the excited crowds inflamed to enthusiasm by their eloquence. After listening to such language as the following, the audience were, doubtless, ready to rush to arms. 'Our object now is,' says Dr. ———, 'reconnoitering, pioneering, and adopting measures for bringing all parts of Protestant Christendom to join in an united, simultaneous attack upon the common enemy. Let the Methodists make an assault on one side, the Baptists on another; let the Congregationalists charge on one flank, and the Episcopalians on the other, until a breach is made in the walls of Babylon, and then rush in and take possession.'

"Again Dr. —— says:

'Passing events portend a crisis at no distant day. A battle is to be fought. Ere long there will be a conflict of nations — a war of revolution.'

"If our Orthodox brethren," continues the Editor, "do not really wish to have the question between Romanists and Protestants settled by the sword, why indulge in such fierce and warlike imagery? We protest against it in the name of the Peace Society."

I cannot forbear to quote a few remarks from the same paper in regard to the *manner* in which Protestants are carrying on the warfare against Romanism. The same speaker quoted above, had, in the course of his very fine address, spoken as follows:—"We propose," he says, "secondly, to unite the minds of Protestant Christians in a simultaneous assault on Rome, and to render the Reformation again aggressive. Since the Reformation has ceased to be aggressive, it has ceased to progress. It is time then for Protestant Christendom to act *against* the enemy—to take a position *of*-fensive as well as *de*-fensive. The result of our inquiries is, that union *is* practicable.

Digitized by Google

Protestant Christians *can* be united in carrying the war to Rome. We propose, therefore, to make an assault on Rome itself."

"3d. By propagating the idea of religious freedom, by bringing this doctrine in contact with the mind of Italy."

"The doctrine of religious freedom is a fundamental one. It lies at the foundation of society. It is one of the first that commends itself to our judgment in childhood— it is so interwoven with all our thoughts and feelings, that to *us* it seems impossible it should not be universally understood and appreciated. The doctrine of religious freedom, i. e. that every man has a right to think and act under a sense of his responsibility to God, that he has in his hands *the Book of God*, — *His* revelation, pointing out to him the way of life, prescribing to him his duty, and that he has a right to read, and think, and ascertain what God would have him to do. It is the doctrine which lies at the basis of the Reformation. There is no other judgment but *private* judgment. The Reformation rests on it. It was this doctrine which began and carried it on, though it has not been carried out in full in any other country but this. In England there was an approximation to it, and a partial approximation in France."

"It moreover lies at the foundation of *Christianity*, and the Pope knows it. How was Christianity introduced to Rome. He will say, *Peter* preached it; but I say, no. Turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and *Paul* will tell you how it came there. But, granting it was first preached at Rome by Peter, how was it introduced? By a course of procedure similar to what *we* propose to adopt now. If he went there, he went in the exercise of his private judgment— all that received it, embraced it in the exercise of their private judgment. No man can act otherwise,

Digitized by Google

and act *rationally.* The right to breathe the vital air, to walk on God's earth, to use our arms and our feet, is not more obvious than the right to use the *reason* with which God has endowed us. If by disseminating this doctrine in Italy, we should blow up the Pope's powder magazine, if we should overturn his throne, we cannot help it,— he should have kept out of the way. We are proclaiming *God's* truth,— we are doing *God's* work, and we are not concerned about the results which may follow. Such is the work before us."

The Editor then remarks: "If our Orthodox brethren *would* but carry out these sentiments, they might form a 'Christian Alliance,' which would amount to something more than mere boasting. Dr. —— has justly defined the principle of the Reformation. If all who act on that principle were combined together, if they were all admitted into the ranks — to adopt the fashionable evangelical imagery — then perhaps the Pope might be in danger of having 'his powder magazine blown up.' But for a few self-selected sects to form an exclusive combination, and *denounce all who do not surrender the right* which Dr. —— so forcibly maintains, and adopt a creed imposed by the clique, to undertake to overthrow the Roman Catholic religion by such a narrow policy, is perfectly ridiculous. If they are in earnest in their apprehensions of the spread of Popery, let them summon the entire hosts of Protestantism to the rescue, and not betray the cause by dividing and distracting the forces of its friends. As it is, these self-complacent sectaries who denominate themselves the 'Christian Alliance,' are placing themselves between two fires, and provoking the hostility of the two great elemental principles of the Church and of Society. They are battling against uniformity, implicit faith, and

Digitized by Google

Church authority, as they are embodied in the Papal system, and against the right of private judgment, and free inquiry, in the entire mass of liberal Christians, whom they exclude from co-operation with them, and excommunicate with an intolerance and arrogated infallibility as glaring and offensive as that of Rome herself.* If the movement against Popery were placed upon a footing, on which all Protestants could rally, we should promptly and earnestly engage in it. But conducted in the narrow spirit, in which it is by the Presbyterians and Orthodox generally, what rational and reflecting person can wonder that the Romanists are increasing with fearful rapidity!"

In regard to the popular warlike phraseology, I would remark, that it is true that the great Apostle of the Gentiles sometimes made use of such expressions, but they were generally used in allusion to the Christian's internal conflicts, which are indeed perpetual. But it ought especially to be remembered that he lived in an age when the world's position was essentially different from what it is at present. The Roman nation was a nation of soldiers, and all the civilized world was under the Roman government. Paul himself was a Roman citizen. It was necessary, before any man could be a candidate for office, that he should serve ten years as a soldier. "At the age of seventeen," says Burnap, in his Lectures on the History of Christianity, "every Roman citizen was liable to be enrolled and sent to the wars. When he arrived at the camp, he entered on a course of life, in which ease and indulgence were altogether unknown. He commenced a discipline of hardship and endurance, which, were it not made certain by historic

* In proof of this I have only to refer to the extracts from the letters to which I am now replying.—M. S. B. D.

Digitized by Google

records, would at this period of the world be utterly incredible. He was there furnished with a shield of sufficient size to protect his whole body, and thick and strong enough to resist the force of arrows, swords, and spears; two javelins of some four feet in length, armed at the end with a three-cornered blade of about eighteen inches. To these was added a two edged sword, sharp at the point, equally calculated to strike or to thrust, as occasion might need. Boots for the defence of the legs, a breastplate of brass, a cap of the same, surmounted by a lofty plume, completed his panoply, and made him an object at once beautiful and terrible to the beholder. In addition to his heavy armor, the Roman soldier was compelled to march under the furniture of his tent, a burden which the puny men of our times would find themselves altogether unable to sustain. When they had arrived at the end of a fatiguing day's march, not an eye could be closed in sleep, nor a limb composed to rest, till their camp was surrounded by a trench twelve feet wide and twelve feet deep, surmounted by a breastwork of the same dimensions. When they were stationary, not a day nor an hour was lost. Their whole time was taken up in military and athletic exercises, which either gave strength and vigor to their bodies, or skill and dexterity to the use of their weapons. Such for nine centuries was a Roman army, not a day for the whole time that it did not exist and perform its various functions."

Under such circumstances, it was exceedingly natural that the sagacious Apostle should clothe his thoughts in such language as would be most readily understood. For many centuries men had constantly lived in a state of warfare, and their ideas would naturally take their hue from the complexion of the times.

Digitized by Google

But now, under the influence of the gospel, there is, to a great extent, "peace on earth," and there ought to be, and there must be, before Christ's kingdom can universally come, "*good will* to man," from his brother man. That there will be an *increasing* conflict of *opinions*, the more men learn to think for themselves, and to throw off the shackles of human authority and tradition, there can be no doubt; but the weapons for this warfare are spiritual, not carnal; the victory is to be gained by a firm and open adherence to truth and duty, and not by denunciation, and the array of hostile forces.

T.

An Orthodox clergyman of very high standing, recently, in a letter to me, objected to the use of the term "Supreme God," as applied to Christ. "That is a phrase," said he, "which I have never, that I know of, once employed myself; for which I have never felt any predilection; which I regard as *unscriptural* and improper, because it seems to make the Son even superior to the Father." To this I replied: "I begin to think you are somewhat of a Unitarian yourself, when you say that you regard the phrase 'the supreme God,' as applied to Christ, as 'unscriptural and improper.' You would not, I presume, be unwilling to apply the same phrase to *the Father*. It would not, I imagine, be unscriptural and improper to call *him* the supreme God. There certainly is a supreme God, and if the Father is not that Being, who is? But if Christ is *equal* with the Father, 'the same in substance, equal in power and glory,' as the Catechism says, why is

Digitized by Google

he not the supreme God too? Why has he not just as good a right to the title as the Father? Look at it candidly, and tell me, what possible difference can there be between two *equal* beings? If the title 'supreme God,' applied to Christ, makes him 'superior to the Father,' then the same title, applied to the Father, makes him superior to the Son. Is not this a logical inference? But if you believe the Father to be superior to the Son, you are no Trinitarian, *in the present sense of that term;* for the Confession of Faith asserts that they are *equal;* and if they are equal, one cannot be superior to the other. Perhaps you believe that, in the Son and Spirit, we see only different manifestations of the same God; in that case, you are only a *modal* Trinitarian; in other words, a *Unitarian.*"

U.

I have just met with a very fine argument on this very point in Professor Norton's *Statement of Reasons,* which I will here introduce for the same reasons which have made me draw so largely upon Professor Sparks; while I would as heartily recommend the perusal of the whole work to those who feel an interest in this matter. Professor Norton says: "*It is evident from the Scriptures, that none of those effects were produced, which would necessarily have resulted from its first annunciation by Christ, and its consequent communication by his Apostles.* The disciples of our Saviour must, at some period, have considered him merely as a man. Such he was, to all appearance, and such, therefore, they must have believed him to be. Before

Digitized by Google

he commenced his ministry, his relations and fellow townsmen certainly regarded him as nothing more than a man. 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and of Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us all?' At some particular period, the communication must have been made by our Saviour to his disciples, that he was not a mere man, but that he was, properly speaking, and in the highest sense, God himself. The doctrines with which we are contending, and other doctrines of a similar character, have so obscured and confused the whole of Christianity, that even its historical facts appear to be regarded by many scarcely in the light of real occurrences. But we *may* carry ourselves back in imagination to the time when Christ was on earth, and place ourselves in the situation of the first believers. Let us then reflect for a moment on what would be the state of our own feelings, if some one with whom we had associated as a man, were to declare to us that he was really God himself. If his character and works had been such as to command any attention to such an assertion, still through what an agony of incredulity, and doubt, and amazement, and consternation, must the mind pass, before it could settle down into a conviction of the truth of his declaration. And when convinced of its truth, with what unspeakable astonishment should we be overwhelmed. With what extreme awe, and entire prostration of every faculty, should we approach and contemplate such a being; if indeed man, in his present tenement of clay, could endure such intercourse with his Maker. With what a strong and unrelaxing grasp would the idea seize upon our minds. How continually would it be expressed in the most forcible language, whenever we had occasion to speak of him. What a deep and in-

Digitized by Google

delible coloring would it give to every thought and sentiment, in the remotest degree connected with an agent so mysterious and so awful. But we perceive nothing of this state of mind in the disciples of our Saviour; but much that gives evidence of a very different state of mind. One may read over the first three Evangelists, and it must be by a more than ordinary exercise of ingenuity, if he discover what may pass for an argument, that either the writers, or the numerous individuals of whom they speak, regarded our Saviour as their Maker and God; or that he ever assumed that character. *Can* we believe, that if such a most extraordinary annunciation, as has been supposed, had ever actually been made by him, no particular record of its circumstances, and immediate effects, would have been preserved? That the Evangelists, in their accounts of their Master, would have omitted the most remarkable event in his history and their own? and that three of them, at least, (for so much must be conceded,) would have made no direct mention of far the most astonishing fact in relation to his character? Read over the account of the conduct and conversations of his disciples with their Master, and put it to your own feelings, whether they ever thought that they were conversing with their God? Read over these accounts attentively, and ask yourself, if this supposition do not appear to you the most incongruous that ever entered the human mind? Take only the facts and conversation, which occurred before our Saviour's crucifixion, as related by St. John. Did Judas believe that he was betraying his God? Their Master washed the feet of his Apostles. Did the Apostles believe — but the question is too shocking to be stated in plain words. Did they then believe their Master to be God, when, surprised at his taking notice of an inquiry

Digitized by Google

which they wished to make, but which they had not in fact proposed,* they thus addressed him? 'Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and that there is no need for any man to question thee. By this we know *that thou camest from God.*' † Could they imagine, that he, who, throughout his conversation, spoke of himself only as the minister of God, and who in their presence prayed to God, was himself the Almighty? Did they believe it was the Maker of Heaven and Earth whom they were deserting, when they left him upon his apprehension? But there is hardly a fact or conversation recorded in the history of our Saviour's ministry, which may not afford ground for such questions as have been proposed. He who maintains that the first disciples of our Saviour did ever really believe that they were in the immediate presence of their God, must maintain at the same time, that they were a class of men by themselves, and that all their feelings and conduct was immeasurably and inconceivably different, from what those of any other human beings would have been, under the same belief.

"But beside the entire absence of that state of mind, which must have been produced by this belief, there are other continual indications, direct and indirect, of their opinions and feelings respecting their Master, wholly irreconcilable with the supposition of its existence during any period of his ministry or their own. Throughout the New Testament we find nothing which implies that such a most extraordinary change of feeling ever took place in the disciples of Christ, as must have been produced by the communication that their Master was God himself upon earth. Nowhere do we find the expression of those irre-

* See John xvi. 17, 18, 19. † John xvi. 30.

Digitized by Google

sistible and absorbing sentiments, which must have possessed their minds under the conviction of this fact. With this conviction, in what terms would they have spoken of his crucifixion, and of the circumstances with which it was attended? The power of language would have sunk under them in the attempt to express their feelings. Their words, when they approached the subject, would have been little more than a thrilling cry of horror and indignation. On this subject, they did indeed feel most deeply; but can we think that St. Peter regarded his Master as God incarnate, when he thus addressed the Jews by whom Christ had been crucified? 'ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, proved to you to be A MAN FROM GOD, by miracles and wonders and signs, which *God did by him* in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know, him, delivered up to you in conformity to the fixed will and foreknowledge of God, ye have crucified and slain by the hands of the heathen. Him has God raised to life.'"

Professor Norton then goes on to show how difficult it would have been to persuade the Jews to receive this doctrine, so opposed to the fundamental principle of their faith, the unity of God; how often it would have to be *explicitly stated*, explained, defended, and reinforced; and he plainly shows, as any one who looks into the Bible can see, that we can find there nothing of the kind.

Digitized by Google

V.

Mr. French, a Roman Catholic Barrister, in a discussion between himself and the Rev. J. Cumming, at Hammersmith, in 1840, page 482, makes these cutting remarks on those Protestants who denounce Unitarians for interpreting the Bible for themselves. "If the Unitarian be not a Christian," he says, "*it is in consequence of that prerogative* with which my learned friend gratuitously invests him, namely, the right of interpreting the Bible for himself, spurning the authority of the Church of Ages, which teaches us that Christ is both God and man. It is utterly useless for my friend to tell me the Unitarian is not sincere and Christian. What! proscribe all the Unitarians in England; men of splendid and commanding genius; men of conscience and honor; men of integrity and truth; men who live and die — die actually with the persuasion that Christ is mere man, and 'Intercessor' — who believe in God most firmly! Is it just, is it honorable, to say, they are not Christians, when it is his very system, the system which he himself recommends, that has caused their unchristianization? Oh it is really unfair! it is decidedly unkind, ungenerous, and unfair on the part of my learned friend, or on the part of any clergyman of the Church of England or Scotland."

Digitized by Google

W.

To continue in the faith, as we have been taught it in the Bible, is one thing, and to continue in the faith as we have been taught by human interpretations, is another. To continue in the faith of the Bible, we must first find out what there is taught. And here, at once, opinions are formed as various as the human mind. Dr. Campbell remarks, "As to orthodox, I should be glad to know the meaning of the epithet. Nothing, you say, can be plainer. The orthodox are those, who, in religious matters, entertain right opinions. Be it so. How, then, is it possible I should know who they are that entertain right opinions, before I know what opinions are right? I must therefore unquestionably know orthodoxy, before I can know or judge who are orthodox. Now, to know the truths of religion, which you call orthodox, is the very end of my inquiries: and am I to begin these inquiries on the presumption that without any inquiry I know it already?.... There is nothing about which men have been, and still are, more divided. It has been accounted orthodox divinity in one age, which hath been branded as ridiculous fanaticism in the next. It is at this day deemed the perfection of orthodoxy in one country, which in an adjacent country is looked upon as a damnable heresy. Nay, in the same country, hath not every sect a standard of its own? Accordingly, when any person seriously uses the word, before we can understand his meaning, we must know to what communion he belongs. When that is known, we comprehend him perfectly. By the orthodox he means always those who agree in opinion with him and his party; and by the heterodox, those who differ from him. When

Digitized by Google

one says, then, of any teacher whatever, that all the orthodox acknowledge his orthodoxy, he says neither more nor less than this: 'All who are of the same opinion with him, of which number I am one, believe him to be in the right.' And is this anything more than what may be asserted by some person or other, of every teacher that ever did, or ever will exist? To say the truth, we have but too many ecclesiastic terms and phrases which savor grossly of the arts of a crafty priesthood, who meant to keep the world in ignorance, to secure an implicit faith in their own dogmas, and to intimidate men from an impartial inquiry into holy writ."—*Letters on Systematic Theology*, pp. 112 – 115.

THE END.

Digitized by Google

VALUABLE WORKS,

Published and for Sale

BY JAMES MUNROE & COMPANY,

No. 134 Washington Street, Boston.

LIVERMORE'S COMMENTARY. The Four Gospels; with a Commentary, intended for Sabbath School Teachers and Bible Classes, and as an Aid to Family Instruction. By A. A. Livermore. St. Ed. 2 Vols., containing Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. 12mo. 350 pp. each.

LIVERMORE'S COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. 12mo., with Map.

"In a field of criticism, where sectarianism has spoiled nearly every tree and flower, this new product of a generous soil deserves our notice as the nearest approach to an unsectarian work. We feel certain it will meet the wants of all who call themselves liberal Christians, as a family expositor, a reference book in the study of the Gospel, a companion in the Sunday School, and an aid to daily devotion. It is learned, yet not dry; rational, yet not cold; fervent, yet not fanatical; tasteful, yet not one line for mere taste. Mr. Livermore is concise, practical, reasonable, full of generous and holy feeling. His first volume having met in a few months with so extensive a sale as to authorize a stereotype edition, we commend its simplicity, earnestness, purity of morals, and practical piety to a popularity like that which has already rewarded the like labors of Mr. Barnes." — *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review.*

NORTON ON THE TRINITY. A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians, concerning the Nature of God, and the Person of Christ. By Andrews Norton. 12mo. pp. 372.

"Mr. Norton writes for intelligent men, for those who do not shrink from examination and patient thought, who are not disgusted at being required to exercise a manly independence, who seek truth for truth's sake, and are willing to pay the price of its attainment. Such will find in the work before us ample materials for study and reflection. We are much mistaken, if to many of them it do not open new views."—*Christian Examiner.*

SKETCH OF THE REFORMATION. By Rev. T. B. Fox.

"This volume contains a short but clear narrative of the lives and labors of Luther, Tetzel, Melancthon, Zwingle, and others."

Digitized by Google

NOYES'S HEBREW PROPHETS. A New Translation of the Hebrew Prophets, arranged in Chronological Order. 3 vols. 12mo. Each volume comprising about 300 pp. New edition, with additions.

"This new edition is of increased value on account of the additions and corrections which it contains. Common readers will be surprised to observe how many passages, which are unintelligible to them in the common version, are here made plain and significant by a slight change of expression, of the meaning of a single word, or the turn of a sentence. We should advise all who wish to procure a set of these translations to make haste to obtain one; it is a purchase which they will never regret."—*Christian Register.*

NOYES'S JOB. An Amended Version of the Book of Job, with an Introduction and Notes, chiefly Explanatory. By George R. Noyes. Second Edition, revised and corrected. 12mo.

"No translation has appeared in England, since that of Isaiah by Lowth, which can sustain a comparison with that of the Book of Job, by Mr. Noyes. With some slight exceptions, this latter is very much what we could wish it to be."—*Spirit of the Pilgrims.*

FRIENDLY LETTERS TO A UNIVERSALIST, on Divine Rewards and Punishments. By Bernard Whitman. 16mo. pp. 368.

"Though this work was hastily *written*, the *materials* for it were collected with good care and fidelity. It is a thorough work. It covers the whole ground of Universalist argument; and gives a faithful exposé of the opposing testimony of reason and Scripture. The work can hardly exasperate those against whose creed it is aimed; for a spirit of courtesy and kindness pervades it. Nor can one, who already believes in a righteous retribution, fail to have his faith strengthened by so able a defence of that doctrine."—*American Monthly Review.*

JOUFFROY'S ETHICS. Introduction to Ethics: including a Critical Survey of Moral Systems. Translated from the French of Jouffroy. By William H. Channing.

This work consists of a critical review of various ethical systems; aiming to give a fair view of the merits and demerits of each, with especial regard to the particular points wherein lay the faultiness of each. To every student of moral philosophy, and of the history of the human mind, such a sketch must be of very great interest and value.

Digitized by Google

PALFREY'S LOWELL LECTURES. Lowell Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity. By John Gorham Palfrey. With a Discourse on the Life and Character of John Lowell, Jr. By Edward Everett. 2 vols. 8vo.

PALFREY'S SERMONS. Sermons on Duties belonging to some of the Conditions and Relations of Private Life. By John G. Palfrey, D. D., Professor of Biblical Literature in the University of Cambridge. 12mo.

PALFREY'S ACADEMICAL LECTURES. Academical Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities. By John Gorham Palfrey, D. D., LL. D. Vol. I. The Last Four Books of the Pentateuch. Vol. II. Genesis and Prophets. 8vo.

"The first volume of this valuable, learned, and elaborate work has just publicly appeared in a truly beautiful form. It is not a book to be lightly read or lightly spoken of.

"We can only say that, from the time of its announcement as being in preparation, general expectation has been highly raised in regard to it, and that, as far as we have examined the present volume, or heard the opinions of those who are more competent to pass judgment upon its merits, we are happy to believe that it constitutes a noble addition to the many high claims of its distinguished author to public esteem and honor, as a scholar, a divine, and a devoted supporter of American Literature."—*N. A. Review.*

WORCESTER'S LAST THOUGHTS, on Important Subjects. In three parts. I. Man's Liability to Sin. II. Supplementary Illustrations. III. Man's Capacity to Obey. By Noah Worcester, D. D. 16mo. pp. 328.

CHANNING'S WORKS. The Works of William E. Channing, D. D. First complete American edition, with an Introduction. 6 vols. 12mo. $5.

☞ This edition of the works was published under the author's own supervision.

CHANNING'S SELF-CULTURE. Self-Culture. By W. E. Channing. With a Biographical Sketch of the author. 16mo. cloth, gilt. Price 37½ cents.

"It should be the pocket companion of every young man in the country, and to be found on every lady's centre table."—*Cultivator.*

"It is indeed a gem of English composition, of sound, vigorous thought and pure wisdom."—*Mobile Register.*

Digitized by Google

PRACTICAL ETHICS. Human Life, or Practical Ethics. From the German of De Wette. Translated by Samuel Osgood. 2 vols. 12mo.

"Those interested in the study of ethics, will find in the present volumes, a beautiful richness of illustration, and an extended consideration of the practical duties of life; and although many readers will doubtless dissent from some of the author's principles, as from his application of them, the book merits a reading, as exhibiting the views of a philosophical and independent mind, and, at the same time, those which prevail to a great extent on the continent of Europe."—*American Eclectic.*

BUCKMINSTER'S WORKS. The Works of Joseph Stevens Buckminster; with Memoirs of his Life. In 2 vols. 12mo.

"One of the first religious books we remember to have read was the first volume of Buckminster's Sermons; and the beautifully writen life and two or three of the discourses fixed themselves in the mind, as nothing is fixed there save in our early years.

"His sermons, as sermons, are certainly surpassed by none in the language."—*Monthly Miscellany.*

PARKER'S MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS. The Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of Theodore Parker, Minister of the Second Church in Roxbury.

"We are glad to see these miscellanies republished, and think all who read them will enjoy their spirit even when they disagree with their doctrines. The tone of earnest conviction, the glow of feeling, the occasional beauty of expression in these pages, is very refreshing."—*Merchants' Magazine.*

AN OFFERING OF SYMPATHY TO THE AFFLICTED: Especially to Parents bereaved of their Children. Being a collection from Manuscripts never before published. With an Appendix of Extracts. By Francis Parkman. Third edition. 18mo.

"We are not surprised that Dr. Parkman's excellent little volume has reached a third edition. It has carried comfort to many a heart. We wish it well on its errand of peace."—*Christian Examiner.*

"A volume deserving a cordial welcome to every house and heart. The variety of thought and expression, and yet the perfect harmony of tone of feeling which marks this spiritual wreath for a Christian cemetery, will make it live and bloom as long as sorrow is known."—*Hunt's Magazine.*

Digitized by Google

HENRY WARE, Jr. Views of Christian Truth, Piety, and Morality, Selected from the Writings of Dr. Priestley. With a Memoir of his life. By Henry Ware, Jr. 12mo. pp. 288.

WARE ON CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. On the formation of Christian Character, addressed to those who are seeking to lead a Religious Life. By Henry Ware, Jr., D. D. Twelfth Edition. 18mo.

WARE'S LIFE OF THE SAVIOUR. The Life of the Saviour. By Henry Ware, Jr., Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care in Harvard University. pp. 284. Fourth Edition. 18mo.

"This volume is intended particularly for the young; but it is a valuable aid to every reader of the Gospels; an aid to the understanding of them, and an aid to reflections upon their truths. It unites, in some good measure, the advantages of a paraphrase and a commentary, without the feebleness of the former, or the dryness of the latter."—*American Monthly Review.*

HENRY WARE, Jr's. SCENES AND CHARACTERS, Illustrating Christian Truth. In a series of Tales, each number complete in itself. To be had separately. Edited by the Rev. H. Ware, Jr.

"If we may judge of this series of little works from the two numbers which have appeared, we should say that it bids fair to be eminently useful, and to realize whatever we might expect from the high character of the writers engaged. They should be read. Whoever contributes at all to circulate them does good to the public."—*Boston Daily Advertiser.*

1. TRIAL AND SELF-DISCIPLINE. By Miss Savage, Author of 'James Talbot.'
2. THE SKEPTIC. By Mrs. Follen, Author of 'The Well-spent Hour.'
3. HOME. By Miss Sedgwick, Author of 'Redwood,' &c.

"One of the sweetest homely pictures of domestic life among the middle classes of New-England which it is possible to imagine, and one full of the instruction which makes a way to the heart."—*Tait's Magazine.*

4. GLEAMS OF TRUTH. By the Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.
5. THE BACKSLIDER. By the Author of the 'Huguenots,' &c.
6. ALFRED; Or, The Effects of True Repentance. And the BETTER PART. By the Author of 'Sophia Morton.'

FOLLEN'S WORKS. The Works of Charles Follen; with a Memoir of his Life. 5 vols. 12mo.

Digitized by Google

MRS. FARRAR'S LIFE OF JOHN HOWARD, the Philanthropist, with a Preface by Rev. Henry Ware, Jr.

This volume gives an interesting narrative of the life and also of the various undertakings of this eminent philanthropist; it is written with all the vigor of the other works of its author.

GREENWOOD'S SERMONS. Sermons to Children. By F. W. P. Greenwood, D. D., Minister of King's Chapel, Boston. 1 vol. 16mo.

"We are delighted to meet with a volume for children in some other form than a story. We believe these Sermons will be read with as much interest as any of the little novels with which the press teems, and with more profit."—*Christian Examiner.*

GREENWOOD'S SERMONS. Fifty-eight Sermons, by Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, D. D., Minister of King's Chapel. 2 vols. 12mo. with Portrait. vol. 1, pp. 396, vol. 2, pp. 398.

GREENWOOD'S LIVES OF THE APOSTLES. 16mo. Two Steel Plates.

MEMOIRS OF JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN. With an Introduction, by Henry Ware, Jr. 2d Ed. with additions. Two Steel Plates. 1 vol. 16mo.

BURNAP'S EXPOSITORY LECTURES. Expository Lectures on the Principal Passages of the Scriptures which relate to the Doctrine of the Trinity. By George W. Burnap, Pastor of the First Independent Church of Baltimore. 12mo. pp. 336.

"It is refreshing in these days of controversy to meet with a volume of divinity that one can read with composure. His lectures discuss topics concerning which a difference of opinion exists but in a truly catholic spirit."—*Observer.*

JAMES MUNROE & COMPANY,

Being engaged in the publication of Juvenile Works, can offer to individuals and others, selecting for Sabbath, School, and District Libraries, superior advantages. And they keep constantly on hand the largest assortment of Juveniles to be found, embracing all the works by Mary Howitt, Mrs. Ellis, Aunt Kitty, Charlotte Elizabeth, the Abbotts, and others. All of which will be sold at a LARGE DISCOUNT from the trade prices.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

MAY 17 '51 H

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google